Georges Mikhael Raad

SAINT CHARBEL
SAINT FROM LEBANON

GIANT IN LIFE GIANT IN DEATH

THE SAINT WHO SHOCKED THE 21st CENTURY

Georges Mikhael Raad

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Born in Rayak - BekaaValley - Lebanon. Philosophy and theology courses at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik–USEK. Complete course in economy and politic at the Lebanese University. Advanced courses in philosophy, theology, theater and international relations. Graduated in Law at Faculdades Metropolitanas Unidas – São Paulo - Brazil. He participated as assistant director in the black and white film about the life of Saint Charbel in 1966, the first film after the beatification of Saint Charbel, and played the role Abdo who puts water instead of oil and the lamp lights up.

Georges Mikhael Raad

DEDICATORY

In honor of my mother,
Rose Sabeh Harb,
My father, Mikhael Dib Raad El Tannuri.
My sisters:
Wajiha Raad El Ghassan,
Naziha Raad Nejm;
My Brothers:
Nazih, John, Nabih, Wajih and families.

I remember my mother once told me that I would be more "me" If I became a monk.

Mother!
You are all beautiful and there is no blemish in you.
A honeycomb flows from your lips. Honey and milk are under your tongue, and the smell of your clothes is like the smell of Lebanon.
Your appearance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Georges Mikhael Raad

SAINT POPE JOHN-PAUL II

Saint Charbel is the Saint of the 21st Century

"Words of Holy Father John-Paul II"

Georges Mikhael Raad

HIS PATRIARCHAL BEATITUDE
NESSRALLA BOUTROS SFEIR

WHO LEBANON LOVES

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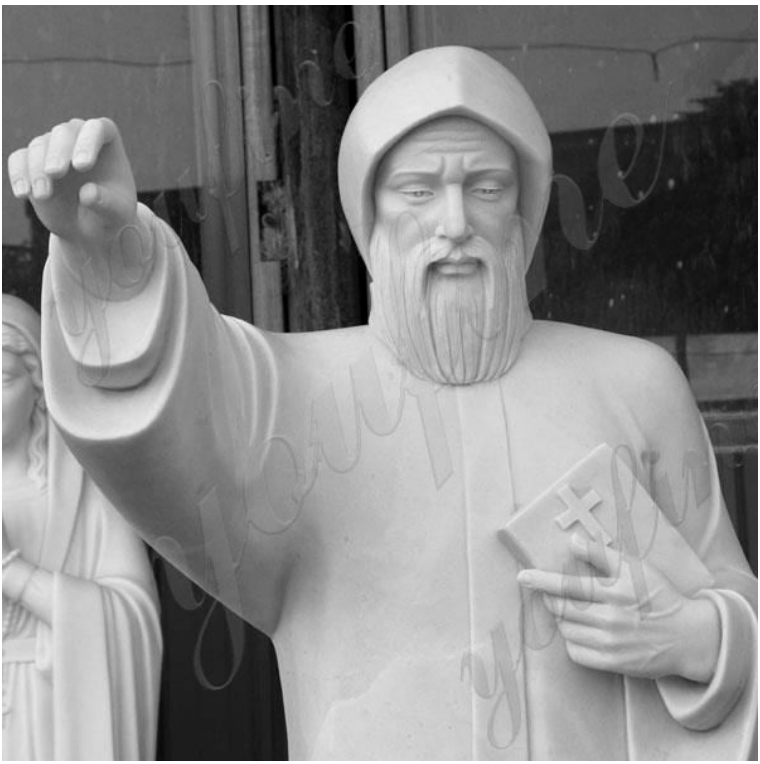
Georges Mikhael Raad

THE SAINT WHO SHOCKED THE 21st CENTURY



Georges Mikhael Raad

TO THE READER

I would like to begin by pointing out that my intention in writing this work is the cry of a servant of God, Saint Charbel Makhluf, and his devotee to try to make man a better man, sensitive, just, generous, benevolent, more attached to spiritual than material values, happy to give than to receive, to know how to reap the spiritual fruits existing in the depths of the soul of each human being. I am convinced that my dear reader will appreciate this book, with great faith, in order to reveal not only the life of Saint Charbel, but also the desire to practice what he taught in order to obtain divine grace. Devotion to Saint Charbel is the right way to find peace, the way reserved by God in the soul of every human being called to be holy and for the bad moments he goes through in his earthly existence. Saint Charbel is a life lesson for all generations, because he presents material wealth as the exclusive fruit of greed and oppression and as the path of affliction, vice, unhappiness: he enslaves, corrupts, hardens, unhappy. On the other hand, poverty is invariably synonymous with goodness, freedom, virtue, honesty, happiness. He was like Christ, the first to exalt the poor and to belittle the rich. Following the example of Christ, "he lifted up his eyes to his disciples and said to them, 'Blessed are you poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. But woe to you, the rich!" (Saint Luke, 6:20 and 24).

And I repeat to you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the bottom of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Saint Matthew, 19:24).

For Saint Charbel, humanity is the spirit of God on earth. This spirit walks among the nations, preaching love, revealing the meaning of life, but receives only hatred and laughter. It is this same spirit that Christ heard and followed, causing his own crucifixion. In his prayers, Saint Charbel loved the enemies of Lebanon, his homeland, because they are the children of the universal spirit. Take of my people what you will, do with me what you will, shed my blood, the blood of my people, and burn my body; you can never molest my soul, nor kill it. Chain the hands and feet of my countrymen and followers, and throw them into the dark prisons; you can never chain their thoughts, for they are as free as the wind that runs in an unlimited and immeasurable space. But Saint Charbel proclaimed the shadows of past centuries that walked through the valleys and mountains of Lebanon, and the souls of the kings and prophets who hovered on their hills, pointing to the glories of the Phoenicians, the prophets who came out of this land blessed by Christ and where He took refuge, when he felt tired of the noise of the man, of his laments and sighs, of the putrid smells of the alleyways that spread the germs of disease, and, like tiny invisible arrows, they hurt his ear and poison the air.

I also emphasize the universal character of the personality of a servant of God in whom extraordinary gifts and virtues are gathered.

Saint Charbel is an extraordinary phenomenon

He never exchanged the sorrows of his heart for the joys of men. He preferred that his life remain a tear that purifies his heart and makes him understand the mysteries and secrets of life. And he made his smile a means to bring him closer to his fellow men and symbolize his glorification of God. He would rather die of desire than live in indifference. He feels deep within himself the hunger for love of neighbor, for he observes and verifies that the satisfied are the unhappy of men and those who most resemble inanimate matter. Men are noisy like storms and in their solitude and silence he groans in a low voice, for the violence of the storm passes and is swallowed up by the abyss of time; but the groaning will survive in God. Men cling to matter, cold as steel; while Saint Charbel seeks the fire of love and presses it against his chest, so that his ribs and entrails are consumed; for matter kills man without pain, and love assures him life through pain. Silence and pain flow into an ocean of joy and knowledge because Divine Wisdom has created nothing in vain on the surface of the earth. The story of the child Charbel differs from that of other children. It took a sailing course from the very beginning of her childhood colleagues and differentiates herself by experimenting bold techniques of courage, perseverance of an individual who refuses the routine of his contemporaries to draw, himself, the plan of his life and build the temple of his own life, in the blossoming of the flowers of all its virtualities.

Young Charbel's efforts led him to the wisdom and the idea that we can overcome even death: we are destined for everything and much more.

Georges Mikhael Raad

Nothing is more honest, exemplary and stimulating, and at the same time consistent with the morality of perfection than what is compatible with the Gospel ideal. We will see through the figure of "Charbel" the path of Christ's life.

This is the first impression that people will notice when reading the book and watching the film about the life of Saint Charbel, in its black and white version, made in 1966, one year after the beatification of Saint Charbel.

What we consider extraordinary, apart from the personality of Saint Charbel Makhluf, is his extreme humility clearly depicted in moving episodes; his contempt for material riches and his total abandonment to the pleasures of the earth, his absolute detachment from earthly goods for the integral dedication to the service of God and the salvation of souls.

A Chosen One of the Lord, like Saint Charbel, whose life took place in the remote and legendary Lebanon; whose deeds shook convictions, drawing them into the bosom of the Holy Church, the most hardened unbelievers, and whose fame and glory spread throughout the world, should not and could not remain ignored in this blessed land of America, where thousands of his compatriots live. God is the one who dwells up there in the most sublime places of eternity, and at the same time down here in the solitude of the saints, and under their caves, in their tabernacles and cells, where he spends his days talking secretly with them.

We will see through the figure of "Charbel" the path of Christ's life.

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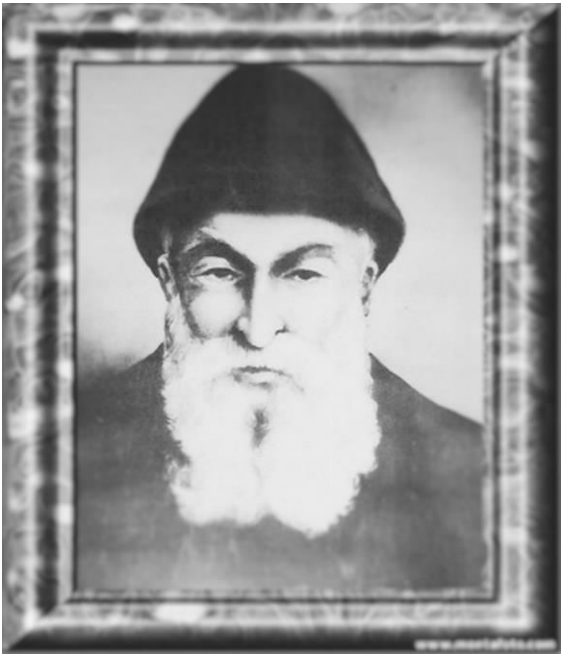
Alas, how many joys and so many heavenly consolations, said Saint Charbel in his talks with God!

When God secretly erat in tabernaculo meo, when omnipotens erat mecum. In a word, He is in your house. Love the unexpected, the unique and faithful among all friends. That is why you are reading this book in English. That and for another reason: the desire to contribute, by the modest part of my effort, to the greatest exaltation of the Saint who raised the work of Christ's soldiers on earth; dead, he continues to cooperate in it, by convincing miracles.

Georges Mikhael Raad



MIRACOLOUS PHOTO OF SAINT CHARBEL

Walking through the streets of the merchants, I see the strands of cloth that man has woven since the beginning of time without knowing that at the end of his work, he will have built the prison in which he will be imprisoned. Vain are man's actions and vain are his desires and hopes.

Life is all there is on earth. Among the palaces of life, only one thing deserves our love and devotion: it is the awakening of something deep within the soul. It was this mysterious hand that took the veils from my eyes. This is what happened, since the age of 8 years, I was devoted to Saint Charbel and all the saints, servants of God.

These saints took refuge in solitude to live in a state of awakening, and to discover and feel peace. It is an awakening in the depths of the soul.

Those who feel it cannot express it in words. And those who do not feel it, can never know it in words.

I am convinced that my dear reader will enjoy this book, with a lot of faith, in order to reveal not only the life of Saint Charbel, but also the desire to practice what he taught, servant of God, in order to obtain divine grace.

What would be the use for a man to possess a rich treasure if he hides it in his field or in his house without taking advantage of it?

The life of Saint Charbel is for us a precious treasure that we must enjoy, an abundant treasure that we must share with others, it is a source of spiritual wealth that has never been exhausted.

It is a hidden mine that we must exploit to extract the rich lessons of peace where they accumulate.

Like a garden tray, we exhale the heavenly perfumes of the life of the beatified that draw him to follow in the footsteps of those who were faithful to God, to Jesus, to Our Lady Mother of God, before being the pious apostle.

For these reasons, make the reading of the saint's life an object of meditation to praise and glorify God. Devotion to Saint Charbel is a providential means of Peace, reserved by God for the bad times we face; the daily practice of this devotion is one of the elements of progression and brotherhood that becomes a source that reveals the spirit that is in your stagnant subconscious.

Nowhere, in any reading, one finds peace of mind, except by reading the life of Saint Charbel, to the point of becoming faithful to his teachings.

We could enjoy great peace if we did not want to deal with the sayings and facts of others that do not belong to us. How can

we be at peace for long if we meddle in the affairs of others, if we seek external relations, which are rarely and almost never gathered internally? Blessed are the simple ones, for they will have much peace. Why have many saints been so perfect and contemplative?

Because they have sought to mortify themselves entirely in all their earthly desires and have thus been able in the depths of their hearts to unite with God and care for themselves. However, we take care too much of our own passions and too many ephemeral things. It is rare that we can perfectly conquer even a single vice; we do not inflame ourselves with the desire to progress every day; hence the coldness and lukewarmness in which we remain.

If we were perfectly dead to ourselves and without inner hindrance, we could create a taste for divine things and experience the sweetness of heavenly contemplation.

What prevents us above all is that we are not yet free from our passions and concupiscences, and that we do not strive to follow the perfect path of the saints.

A small setback is enough to discourage us completely from seeking human consolation. If we tried to stand firm in battle, as brave soldiers, we would surely see God's help fall upon us.

For He is always ready to help the fighters to whom His grace has been entrusted: He who gives us opportunities to fight so that we can achieve victory.

If we make our spiritual pleasure consist only in outward observances, our devotion will be short-lived. Let us therefore put the axe to the root so that, freed from passions, our soul may enjoy peace. If every year we were to eradicate a single vice soon, we would be perfect. Our fervor and our exploitation should grow every day; but today it is considered a great thing to be able to retain some of the primitive fervor. If at first we made an effort, then we could do everything with ease and taste. It is expensive to leave our customs, but it is more expensive to go against our own will. But if you don't overcome the small, light obstacles, how will you overcome the big ones?

Resist your inclination at the beginning and break the bad habit, so that you do not gradually get into more trouble.
If you consider the degree of peace you enjoy and the pleasure you give to others, if you live well, you are certainly more concerned about your spiritual progress. When we visit a graceful garden tray, we like to pick a few flowers and form a bouquet and bring them home. As you read this book and meditate, do the same; pick at least two flowers, two precious virtues among many others, which are capable of adorning your hearts: True love and perfect obedience. A generous love that leads us to imitate Saint Charbel, to appreciate and cherish ourselves, to love and embrace out of devotion to him, what he loved and embraced out of love for us, especially humiliations and sufferings, so as to resemble him, to be a victim with him, like him and out of love for her.

The other virtue that we must strive to imitate more particularly is the perfect obedience that he loved so much that he never allowed himself to apply it in his obedience to his superiors. This obedience made him see, through his superiors, whoever he was, the representative of God himself. It was the deep respect, fraternal love, total trust, absolute abandonment that radiated around him. These two virtues that we can call, in two words, obedient love or obedience out of love, were like two wings with which the heart of Saint Charbel like the pure dove flew into the hearts of Jesus and Saint Mary, Mother of God, to take refuge in them and drink from their sources a new life, Eternal Peace.
This is the wish that I give back to our reader and I ask from the depths of the heart of Jesus, our Blessed Mother, Mother of God and of all, that the Immaculate Mary magnifies herself with God, following the example of Saint Charbel, so that we can live in abundance and in God's blessing with hands stretched out towards the world.

GOD AND HIS SAINTS

God, creator of the world and of human history in which he reveals himself and fulfills his purpose as Father of humanity, he also reveals himself through his saints, for they are his creatures, like every human being.
The Incarnation of his son who accepted to become man, like every human being He did as if human time united itself to Divine Eternity and revealed itself in the Holiness of Jesus.

In this way, we consider that God also reveals Himself through His saints, following the example of His Son who has given all human beings the benefit of this grace, this life and the gifts of the Holy Spirit whom we call and whom each of us must live as sons of the Divine Father. Saint Charbel is our eternal hope and with his untiring love for God in all his life of sacrifice, obedience, silence that put him on the list of God's saints, we ask Saint Charbel to intercede before God and his Son Jesus and Our Lady, Mother of God for our salvation not by clinging to the material but by realizing Love, Union, Faith to survive in heavenly and eternal Peace.

In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he says: "Brothers, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father to whom the glory belongs give yourselves a spirit of wisdom. May he open your hearts to his light, so that you may know what hope his call gives you, what riches of glory are in your inheritance with the saints, and what immense power he has wrought for us who believe, according to his action and omnipotent strength. He manifested His power with Christ when He rose from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in heaven, far above all authority, power, sovereignty or title that could be mentioned not only in this world but also in the world to come. Yes, he has put everything under his feet and made him, who is first and foremost the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who possesses the universal fullness. Saint Charbel, for his heroic life, freed himself to help others free themselves from their selfishness, their passions. Faithful to God's call and to love, Saint Charbel experienced true happiness, total balance, authentic freedom and perfect serenity.

Charbel thus became a living example for our world so shaken by materialism and libertinism.

In fact, our world today is disoriented and torn; it has a lot of science but little spirit, a lot of of interest but little love, much selfishness but little self-denial and abandonment to God and his saints. It is understood that love can give the world harmony, humility and the satisfaction of living. The life of Saint Charbel is, for each one of us, a model of a good journey.

WHO IS SAINT?

God who is holy in all his works shows himself in a special and admirable way in his saints. He gives them gifts reserved for them and for every human being who begins his life with baptism. Saint Charbel benefited from this grace that we must obtain by his fidelity to obey the divine graces, his generosity to do what God asked him, his insistence to fulfill himself and to use all the means of obedience to God. We should therefore consider him as an example, a patron and dedicate ourselves to him. Every Christian who desires peace, every religious soul who seeks this sublime vocation, should imitate Saint Charbel who received this divine grace and who is within the reach of every human being. Peace is found in silence and solitude. Spiritual silence is acquired in the reading of spiritual works. But in the hours of aridity, Sacred Scripture comes to our rescue, in it I find a solid and pure source of nourishment. It is in the Gospel that I find all that is necessary for my poor soul. And the true teacher is Jesus: "Jesus does not need books or doctors to instruct souls.

He, the physician of physicians, teaches without the sound of words".

Look at things as they are, don't let anything or anyone throw dust in your eyes. Humanity has no other choice, if it wants to live in peace, than to convert to Jesus!

And the figure of Saint Charbel seems to whisper in our ears and we invite him to exchange the burning earth for the flower garden of divine grace. And seek him with love, so that you may know yourselves; for it is only through such knowledge that you can free yourselves from the evils, not only of the body, but also of the evils of the soul.

He heals the sick in a way that is unknown to us. He astonishes the fever with his touch of snow, and he surprises the hardened limbs with his own calmness, and they bow down before him and are at peace, they end up in an ocean of joy and knowledge, because Divine Wisdom has created nothing in vain on the surface of the earth. Lebanon is proud of Saint Charbel, Saint Rafka and Saint Neemtallah El Hardini. The Holy Popes always addressed the Lebanese people with great affection, sympathy and love saying: "You have the most beautiful figures of holiness in the Church".

What an honor for our Maronite Church, which bears witness to the Gospel of Christ in the Middle East, and which is the only Eastern Church that has always remained Catholic. There is a curious phenomenon: why do we meet so many people who visit the tomb of Saint Charbel on a regular and almost daily basis?

In today's world, so materialistic, so selfish and so sensual, the person afflicted by inner emptiness has a nostalgia for the happiness that is not found in comfort, nor in wealth, nor in the

lust of the flesh, nor in the pride of life, as St. John the Evangelist says (Jn 2:16), but he manages to find it in the virtues that our saints have striven to live with great heroism. So they come here to feel a little happy, close to this man who knew how to know and live the authentic happiness they seek, and to try to imitate him. "What can be said of "the admirable flower of holiness that has blossomed on the vine of the ancient Eastern monastic traditions"?

Saint Charbel, for his heroic life, freed himself to help others free themselves from their selfishness, their passions. Faithful to God's call and to love, Saint Charbel experienced true happiness, total balance, authentic freedom and perfect serenity. Charbel thus became a living example for our world so shaken by materialism and libertinism. In fact, our world today is disoriented and torn; it has a lot of science but little spirit, a lot of of interest but little love, much selfishness but little self-denial and abandonment to God and his saints. It is understood that love can give the world harmony, humility and the satisfaction of living.

The life of Saint Charbel is, for each one of us, a model of a good journey.

OUR LADY, SEAT OF WISDOM

The Virgin is the seat of wisdom, for she is the creature who has most known and loved God. The Gospel tells us: She observed all things and kept them in her heart.

The Virgin is the Seat of Wisdom, for she is the universal Mediatrix whom God established between Him and men, in order to be known and loved. The admirable secret of possessing divine Wisdom: "Mary" - "Wherever she is, she is called Eternal Wisdom". Once we have possessed Mary, we will soon possess divine Wisdom through her intercession. Of all the ways to possess Jesus Christ, Mary is the surest, easiest, shortest and most sacred way, and the best way to belong entirely to Mary is, so to speak, to receive Mary into our home, consecrating ourselves to her as her servants, following the example of Saint Charbel, who knew from his childhood that he had an infinite love for Our Lady. Like all Lebanese, Father Charbel was a faithful and fervent devotee of the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady of Lebanon is the patron and protector of the Maronites, and there is no Lebanese Christian who does not have in his home the venerable image of Our Lady of Lebanon, to be understood with the Blessed Mother of Jesus. Father Charbel leaned with all his soul to the veneration of Mary. During the Mass, and the divine cult prevailed the invocation to the Blessed Virgin. At every moment, Father Charbel thought of her who protected him infallibly and whom he venerated so much.

During Holy Mass, the Maronite priest often mentioned the Mother of the Savior, praying after the consecration:

"O Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for me before your only Son that he may grant me the forgiveness of all my sins and that he may receive from my poor and sinners this sacrifice offered on this altar by the true and holy Mother of my Jesus".

Every first Sunday of the month, in evening prayer, the Maronites sing this precious hymn:

"Blessed are you, Mary, and blessed be your soul, for your happiness far surpasses that of the saints; Blessed are you, for you have borne, caressed and loved like a child the Almighty, who holds the earth in his hands; Blessed are you, for out of your most pure womb has come forth the Savior, like a shining light. He has cast out Satan and given peace to the world".

Father Charbel loved with all his heart his sweet and heavenly Lady, who smiled at him in his difficulties and comforted him in his temptations.

He never stopped praying the rosary in its entirety, and his lips never stopped pronouncing his name, repeating it with assurance and associating it with the names of Jesus and Joseph on his deathbed. No doubt the Almighty Virgin heard her faithful servant, whom she now glorifies throughout the world.

THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC ROMAN MARONITE CHURCH

MARONITE refers to **SAINT MARON**. The Maronite church owes its name to an important monastery erected in memory of an anchorite called Maron.

Who is Saint Maron?

The Bishop of Cyrus, who died in 458, tells in his book "Religious History" written in the year 440, in which the author evokes the life of the hermits of the Cyrrestica.

(The Cyrrestica where Saint Maron spent his life is located in northern Syria) and its surroundings, as well as the life and death of the anchorite Maron who lived in the fourth century. He withdrew into a life of asceticism of the most austere, imitating the Syrian monks of his time.

The city of Cyrus is located about 70 kilometers northeast of Aleppo, and the diocese of Cyrus is limited to the diocese of Antioch. Saint Maron wanted to follow Christ, aspiring to a life of "Christian Perfection". To reach it, he had to renounce the calls of the world and pleasures and retire to a mountain in the diocese of Cyrus, where he settled in the ruins of a pagan temple, transforming it into a place of prayer and meditation. In this place, Saint Maron chose a monastic life much more austere than the other monks of the region. His fame spread so widely that he was surrounded by all those who were looking for a model and an experienced spiritual guide for Christian Perfection. His disciples were numerous and his school of asceticism was one of the most prosperous.

In the year 517, 350 Maronite monks, disciples of Saint Maron, on their way to Kalaat Semaan near Aleppo, were killed in an ambush prepared by their opponents. Both churches, Maronite and Roman Latin, celebrate their martyrdom on July 31 each year.

The companions of the martyrs sent letters to the high religious and civil authorities of the time, accusing their opponents, the monophysites (monophysite: who believed that Jesus Christ's nature remains altogether divine and not human), of the murder. In one of these letters, addressed to Pope Hormizdas in Rome, they confirmed their attachment to the Roman Catholic faith and the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon.

The Pope's response poured an aroma into the wounds of the martyred Church, inviting its adherents to hold fast to the faith and doctrine of the Catholic Church. Christianity had spread with relative ease in the coastal cities and the Bekaa plain in order to open the minds of the habitants of these regions to anything new.

It should not be forgotten that the Lebanese did not find this new doctrine quite strange, which reminded them of certain practices used in their country for a long time. Christianity has been entrusted with a difficult mission, that of reaching the sources of ancestral values, of forcing the sanctuary, the counter-force of the Lebanese.

This is the mission that the monks, hermits and disciples of a holy man, attributed to the search for evangelical perfection and the Absolute. This man of divine inspiration was Saint Maron. Saint Maron died at the beginning of the 5th century, in 410 AD.

DIVINE LOVE

"Saint Charbel loved the enemies of Lebanon"

He loved Lebanon because the whole earth was his homeland and humanity was his people. And man is too weak to divide himself; he desired his land, its beauty, and he loved it; but his countrymen rose up, inflamed with hatred, and attacked his homeland, turning women into widows and orphans, and watering the land with blood, and he prayed, calling his countrymen with moving groans, but they remained deaf to his call, indifferent to his tears, possessed by fanaticism and preparations for war. For Saint Charbel, humanity is the spirit of God on earth. This spirit walks among the nations, preaching love, revealing the meaning of life, but receives only hatred and laughter. It is this same spirit that Christ heard and followed, causing his own crucifixion. In his prayers, Saint Charbel loved the enemies of Lebanon, his homeland, because they are the children of the universal spirit. Take of my people what you will, do with me what you will, shed my blood, the blood of my people, and burn my body: you can never molest or kill my soul. Chaining the hands and feet of my countrymen and disciples and throwing them into the dark prisons: their thoughts can never be chained, for they are free as the wind that runs in an unlimited and immeasurable space.

He loved his brother kneeling in his mosque or tilting in his temple, but he realized that the ramifications of this religion are the different fingers of one divine hand indicating the perfection of the soul.

Saint Charbel makes his brothers understand why they quarrel with him and his disciples, why they invade his country and try to subdue their regimes, abandoning their lands in the service of their rulers to come and seek death in a country where Jesus Christ walked and multiplied the bread and want to win trophies at the price of blood. Is it really glorious for a man to kill his brother?

How can you be wrong about the pros and cons? Divine authority is wisdom, the mother of natural and universal laws. But which authority is the one that murders and incarcerated your brother and then invades neighboring lands to perpetrate murder and implant hatred? Saint Charbel makes us understand that love is justice in its most sublime manifestations.

If, in my love for you, I do not apply the same justice in all the countries, I would only be a hypocrite trying to hide the ugliness of your selfishness under the mask of the luminous sword that will come back against you.

But, Saint Charbel proclaimed the shadows of the centuries that have walked through the valleys and mountains of Lebanon, and the souls of the kings and prophets who have hovered on their hills, pointing to the glories of the Phoenicians, the prophets who came out of this land blessed by Christ and where He took refuge, when he left tired of the noise of the man, of his laments and sighs, of the putrid smells, of the alleys that spread the germs of disease, and, like tiny invisible arrows, they hurt his ear and poison the air.

CENTURIES OF UPHEAVALAND THE LEBANESE REFUGE

The countries of the East lived for three and a half centuries in a state of disorder and anarchy. This destructive anarchy caused by the invading Turks, the Maronites had the only choice to take refuge in Mount Lebanon which became for them the fortress protecting their freedom, allowing them to consolidate their military numbers and preserve their autonomy.

On the mountain, the Maronites already possessed superiority in numbers and intellectual development thanks to the efforts of missionaries and frequent relations with Europe. Under the reign of the Maan princes (1516-1697), the Maronite Patriarchal seat was established in the convent of Saidet (Our Lady) Qannoubin in Kadisha. The first Patriarch who resided in Qannoubin was Youhanna el-Hajj who left his residence in Ilije, (Maifoouk) in 1440, to escape the persecutions of the Mamelouks. At that time, a large number of travelers, representatives of the Pope to the Maronites, visited the country. There were also Catholic religious who founded missions in Lebanon, such as the Capuchins, Franciscans, Jesuits, and Carlmelites.

These travelers expressed their impressions and gave opinions and judgments of great historical value about the time. John Francis Morkanti, apostolic nuncio, commissioned by Pope Pius V (1566-1572) to issue a report on the Maronite community and its patriarch, relates the following:

"I visited the regions of North Lebanon and found out about the way of life of the Maronites. I found that this people followed a simple, charitable, benevolent life, always ready to obey the Roman Church... Big and small, fervent Catholics, all prepared to endure every day the cruelties of the unbelievers. The Maronites would accept martyrdom for the love of God and for the glory of the Roman Church." The first patriarch who resided in Qannoubin was Youhanna El-Hajj who left her residence in Ilije, (Maifoouk) in 1440 to flee persecution by the Mamelukes. At that time, a large number of travelers, representatives of the Pope to the Maronites, visited the country. We also note the presence of Catholic religious who founded missions in Lebanon, such as Capuchins, Franciscans, Jesuits and Carmelites. These travelers expressed their impressions and gave opinions and judgments of great historical value on the period. John Francis Morkanti, Apostolic Nuncio, commissioned by Pope Pius V (1566-1572) to publish a report on the Maronite community and its Patriarch, reports the following: "I visited the regions of North Lebanon and learned the way of life of the Maronites. I noticed that these people led a simple, charitable, benevolent life, always ready to obey the Roman Church... young and old, fervent Catholics, all ready to endure every day the cruelties of unbelievers. The Maronites would accept martyrdom for the love of God and the glory of the Roman Church.

"The Patriarch was hidden in a cave...very secret, difficult to access, from which he retired at dawn and from which he emerged in the afternoon. All the population and hermits cloistered in their caves lead a very regular and austere life, were poorly dressed and had no income, but what the land produced for them was the fruit of the work of their own hands. We do not see in them the boredom of our European prelates. Their ornaments are clean despite their poverty. It is virtue that decorates them and not rich fabrics, embroidery, gold and silver. They have only wooden stakes, but they are golden bishops". As for Father Thomas Vitali, who visited Lebanon in 1643, he speaks of the ties that unite the Maronites to Rome. For him, they are the most linked to the pontifical see... "The only ones among the Eastern communities to persist firmly in their attachment to the one and only Holy Faith and to watch over a patrimony made of virtue and heroism that has greatly marked their ancestors". Thus Maronite society, maintaining a natural balance where customs were considered as laws, was preserved from oppression, despotism and the disorders of anarchy. His body was the subject of a dispute between the inhabitants of several towns in the region. Everyone wanted it. Eventually, it remained in the most populated and powerful village and was preserved in a specially built temple dedicated to his memory. The shrine quickly became a place of pilgrimage for the faithful coming from all regions.

In 452, the Martian emperor ordered the construction of a large monastery near Apamea, the capital of Syria's Monday capital. This monastery of Saint Maron is the birthplace of the Maronite church.

THE MARONITES OF LEBANON

After the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity spread throughout the Lebanese-Phoenician coast. The mountainous region of Lebanon continued to be pagan during the first centuries, worshipping Ashtartha, Adonis and other gods. The Maronites came to this Phoenician mountain to destroy the pagan temples and transform them into places of worship and adoration of the living God, following the example of St. Maron who climbed the mountain of Cyrus and made the pagan temple a place of worship of Christ. Indeed, in the fifth century, Abram of Cyrus, a disciple of Saint Maron, chose Lebanon to convert the pagans who lived there to Christianity. Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus, tells in his book that Abram and his companions settled in a pagan village in Lebanon, probably "Monaitra", in the region of Aqura, which was part of the Lebanese Phoenicia. Upon his arrival, Abram and his companions began to sing the Divine Office.

The villagers, seeing that they were men of peace, received them; and when they heard their preaching, they became the first Maronites in Lebanon.

After 3 years in Lebanon, Abram chose a replacement from among his companions and returned to the monastery of Cyrus, where he was elected Bishop of Harran. His name was Abram of Cyrus, a Maronite hermit, apostle of Lebanon. The River Adonis, which was born in the region evangelized by this hermit, became the River of Abram in honor of the apostles of Lebanon. Simon, another hermit and disciple of Saint Maron, arrived in Lebanon shortly after Abram and proclaimed the Gospel in the cities of Becharré, Ehden and Hadath. Mountain Maronites invaded the cities on the Phoenician coast; and the first city to convert to Christianity was probably Batrun. The number of Maronites increased during the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries. They settled in the regions of Jbeil (Biblos), Kesrwan and South Lebanon. Men cling to matter, cold as steel, while the saint seeks the fire of love and holds it against his chest to consume his ribs and entrails; for matter kills man without pain, and love assures him of life through pain. Silence and pain lead to a sea of joy and knowledge, for divine Wisdom has created nothing in vain on the surface of the earth. When the monastery of St. Maroun was destroyed at the beginning of the 10th century, the Maronite hierarchy left Syria to set up its definitive headquarters in the Lebanese mountains, inhabited by the Maronites since the 5th century. The Lebanese of the Phoenician mountains embraced the Christian religion and became Maronites, true occupants of the country.

Saint Maron embellished the Divine Choir of Saints. It is He who planted for God the garden that flowers today in the region of Cyrrhus (Theodoret of Cyro). This explains: the Maronites' enormous attachment to the Lebanese mountains, and the tenacious resistance they have witnessed over the centuries to defend Lebanon, their homeland and their wall of faith, identity and freedom.

OUR LEBANESE SAINTS: SAINT RAFQA

To read the life of Sister Rafqa (Rebecca) El-Choboq ElRayés, a Lebanese Maronite nun who was beatified on November 17, 1985, is to see how and how suffering must be lived with joy. Of course, it is not easy to know how to suffer or to be able to suffer; all this is a matter of Christian pedagogy. Nor is it easy to show a smile when the body is totally discouraged and the limbs are disarticulated. It is a whole life of faith in the One who chose the Via Crucis to save the world. Finally, it is not always easy for the human being to keep his inner calm and to have a constantly radiant face when life becomes a permanent night and sleep becomes an extremely rare visitor. We must essentially endow it with a creative spirit, because if we come to experience human suffering, we will be creators of joy and happiness. Orphaned and consecrated to God, cloistered and dragging her martyrdom for decades, Sister Rafqa's life was just as difficult, from childhood to her death.

However, any painful life can be either unhappy and devoid of any consolation - human or divine - or a happy life and source of all comfort. Our Blessed is one of those who followed Christ and had a share in the Holy Cross. Instead of being unhappy and without consolation, Sister Rafqa was able to transform her continual suffering into permanent joy. That is why we are publishing this biography as a gift to those who, in their suffering, seek happiness "in this valley of tears". Lebanese, member of the Lebanese Maronite Order, a female branch, Sister Rafqa was born in 1832 in Himlaya, a Maronite village in the Lebanese mountains, about 700 meters in the center of the country. Her father's name was Mrad Saber El-Choboq El-Rayés, her mother Rafqa Gemayél. We have little information about his family because his village was plundered during the bloody events of the last century, especially in 1860 during the genocide of the Christians, and especially the Maronites. We do know, however, that she was born in 1832, and that her baptismal name was Butrossieh, Pedrina in Portuguese. Her mother died when she was only seven years old. From childhood, she was deprived of the sweetness of her mother's presence; it was the first scar on her tender heart. Widowed, her father remarried. The presence of a stepmother is often bitterly felt by young children, which is why the years of her second childhood were hard, as her stepmother did not receive the affection she needed.

But Butrossieh turned to his heavenly mother, who had also become his earthly mother. This devotion to the Blessed Virgin had been learned from his mother before her death, just as all mothers of yesteryear gave their daughters an education that was both human and Christian; she was taught prayers and acts of piety, especially morning and evening prayer before going to bed. Butrossieh could only be a devout and well-educated girl. Cloistered nun: Once her congregation had been dissolved, our Blessed found herself alone, without anyone to support her; she was in complete disarray. To face such a confused situation, she went to the church in the village of Ma'ad, where she lived, and asked the Lord's help to find out where her Holy Will was. Men cling to matter, cold as steel, while the saint seeks the fire of love and holds it against his chest to consume his ribs and entrails; for matter kills man without pain, and love assures him of life through pain. Silence and pain lead to a sea of joy and knowledge, for divine Wisdom has created nothing in vain on the surface of the earth. When the monastery of St. Maroun was destroyed at the beginning of the 10th century, the Maronite hierarchy left Syria to set up its definitive headquarters in the Lebanese mountains, inhabited by the Maronites since the 5th century. The Lebanese of the Phoenician mountains embraced the Christian religion and became Maronites, true occupants of the country. Saint Maron embellished the Divine Choir of Saints. It is He who planted for God the garden that flowers today in the region of Cyrrhus (Theodoret of Cyro). This explains: the Maronites' enormous attachment to the Lebanese mountains, and

the tenacious resistance they have witnessed over the centuries to defend Lebanon, their homeland and their wall of faith, identity and freedom. **CHARBEL, RAFQA AND NEEMATALLAH EL-HARDINI**: these are "three beautiful figures of holiness" of the Church of Christ. They proclaimed to the whole world that the Maronite Church is a fertile ground for holiness, and that Lebanon was, and still is, a **HOLY EARTH.**

SAINT NEEMTALLAH EL-HARDINI

Saint Nehematallah Kassab Al-Hardini was born in 1808 in Hardin, a Maronite village located in the Lebanese mountains, at about 1,000 meters above sea level, in the district of Batrun, northern Lebanon. His father was Girgès (George) Salhab Kassab of Hardin; his mother, Mariam Raad (Mary) was the daughter of Joseph Raad, a tannurin healer. Both came from deeply Christian families and were as attached to their religion as they were to their traditions. What is striking about the family's history. Hardini is that four of their brothers followed the monastic and priestly life as a means of carrying out their baptisms. Starting with the father who was Tannurin's healer and who led an exemplary monastic life in front of his children.

Mariam Raad and Joseph (Youssef) Raad both come from deeply Christian families, as attached to their religion as to their traditions. When he was baptized, our Saint Hardini received the name of Yussef (Joseph), his grandfather. He was the fourth son of the family, which consisted of five boys and two girls.

The eldest, "Assaf," the fourth Yacub (Jacob), and the youngest, Mariam, married, and their descendants are still living. The second, Antonios (Antonio), was a married priest, because in the Maronite Church, as in all Eastern Churches, the tradition that married people can become priests and continue to have married life has been preserved, even today, provided that parish ministry is guaranteed, but once a deacon or priest, he can no longer marry. The third son, Elijah, entered in 1823. Our Holy Nehmatallah has always been a man of prayer. He has always shown a strong devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. Every day he prayed the Holy Rosary. He always led an exemplary monastic life. He constantly excelled in respectful obedience, sublimated chastity, stripped poverty, convinced faith, encouragement of hope and perfect charity. He was totally subject to Divine Providence. The example of such a holy life taught other monks and even lay people in the surrounding area, so that, both during his life and at his death, his life was the norm to follow in order to become a true monk. Thus, many of his disciples felt inclined to imitate the Master, to follow the same path of holiness. Among them, we can highlight a few: Saint Charbel, "like master, like disciple".

Saint Rafka and Saint Neemtallah, the two servants of God were also members of the Lebanese Maronite Order, each in his respective monastery of men and women. Finally, our Saint was even the promoter of the cultural revival of the Lebanese

Maronite Order; although he was an ascetic and austere monk, he was very open to science and all kinds of culture; which only gave more weight to the life of holiness he had set out for himself. If this Order today has a Catholic University in Lebanon, the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik, it is undoubtedly thanks to the cultural revival initiated by Saint Neemtallah El-Hardini. In short, it can be said that every accomplished man, and especially the saints, adopt a maxim or motto that serves as an anchor for their lives. That of Saint Neemtallah was important for every baptized person, and at the same time very simple and meaningful:

"The wise man is the one who knows very well how to save his own soul. May God our Lord, through his immense goodness and through the intercession of our Lebanese saint Neemtallah El-Hardini, grant us the supreme grace to save our souls, with the same determination and will. May we all one day, together with the saints, rejoice in the eternal happiness of the heavenly homeland. Holy God, Father of mankind, I pray to you that the families of Lebanese origin follow the example of the family of Saint Hardini in guiding their children, lost in this holy land, so that they do not forget their Christian customs and traditions, without clinging to material goods and enslaving them.

"Our Father who are in heaven give us this daily bread"!

THE ROOTS OF CHRISTIANITY IN LEBANON

Christ, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, accomplished the Redemption by his death on the Cross: he triumphed over death by the Resurrection. Before his Ascension, he addressed his disciples in these words: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Committed to the Master's will, the Apostles and disciples brought the message of the "Good News" to all the peoples of the earth. The people of Lebanon were the first to receive the message of salvation. Christ grew up, preached and performed almost all of his miracles in Galilee, located on the borders of South Lebanon, which is why he was co-named "The Galilean".

The "Dictionary of the Bible" delimits the region of Galilee as extending from Acca and Carmel in the south to Tyre and its surroundings in the north, from Lake Tiberias and the Jordan River to the coastal plain in the west; (Vigouroux, F. - Dictionnaire de La Bible," Paris 1903, T. III, p. 87).

In this "Galilee of the nations", the Canaanite and Phoenician race has dominated the Jewish race in number since the time of the perdition of Isaiah, or from the eighth century B.C. onwards" (Vigouroux, F. - Dictionnaire de La Bible," Paris 1903, T. III, p. 87). (Isaiah 9:1, Maccabees 1, 5:14-23).

Christian doctrine could not seem strange to the Lebanese because it does not differ much from their old beliefs. Divine incarnation, self-sacrifice, resurrection, the principle of the Trinity, its openness and the sense of neighbor made, with small variations, an integral part of the eminently religious civilization of ancient Lebanon, which explains the mental and doctrinal affinity between the Lebanese and Christ, Man-God, and his later disciples. Lebanon met all the conditions to be the first land in the world to receive Christianity.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE BEKAA VALLEY

Baalbek, the city of Baal, the ancient Heliopolis, already famous for its ancient and grandiose remains, had welcomed the Christian religion with fervor, becoming one of the most important episcopal centers in Lebanon.
In 330, Emperor Constantine built a monumental church on the ruins of the temple of Baal (Jupiter). Some of its remains are still preserved. In the 4th century, a church dedicated to the cult of Saint Barbara was erected on the site of the temple of Astarte (Venus). Time has not been able to remove its columns and naves covered with mosaics. Excavations in the plain of the Bekaa Valley, especially on the Ras Baalbeck side, have unearthed the remains of churches dating from the first centuries of Christianity. Christianity spread to the coastal cities of Lebanon and the Bekaa, despite the persecutions carried out by the Roman emperors and their officials against the followers of the new religion during the first three centuries until Constantine.

It was then a perpetual ordeal for the church. Archaeological excavations have uncovered traces of churches dating from the early days of Christianity, and paved with beautiful mosaics; to name a few, the churches of Baalbeck, Khalde, Zahrani, Beit-Mery...

Jidejian, N. - Heliopolis, city of the sun (The book)

EVANGELIZATION OF LEBANESE COASTAL CITIES

The predictions of the disciples were marked by persecution: St. Stephen was stoned by the Jews at Jerusalem (Acts 7:55-60); Misfortunes began to threaten the first Christians: many of them found refuge in Lebanon in the year 34 A.D. The signs of the spread of the Gospel in Lebanon since the first days are not lacking. The Acts of the Apostles mentions that Saint Paul, during his passage in Tyre in the year 58, met Christ's disciples with whom he resided for 7 days. The latter asked him not to go to Jerusalem where Christians are persecuted (Acts 21, 3-6). Like Tyre, the city of Melkart, Sidon, in turn, is no stranger to the word of Christ and embraces Christianity. The Acts of the Apostles tells that when St. Paul was taken prisoner in Rome in the year 60, he was free to meet his friends from Sidon (Acts 27:3).

After Tyre and Sidon, Christianity spread to the coastal cities of Lebanon. Saint Leba or Thaddeus, better known as Judas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ, came to preach Christianity in Beirut, just after the ascension of Jesus, by building a church; he was martyred and buried in the same city.

To commemorate his memory, the city's Christians built a large church in his name, according to his writings, Patriarch Severo. St. Peter, head of the apostles, contributed to the spread of Christianity in Beirut, where he founded his church in the middle of the first century of the Christian era. Consecrated bishop of the city of Jbeil by Saint Paul, Saint John Mark founded his first church there. He also endured martyrdom, as mentioned by the historian of Tyre, a Syrian Maronite martyrologist, and the Roman calendar. Passing through Tripoli on his way to Antioch, St. Paul appointed Maron or Maronos, bishop of the city, as well as twelve priests who were to be ordained with him in the same ceremony. As you can see, Christianity is well established in the country of Lebanon. This small shoot planted by Christ, was well protected, treated and cared for later by his disciples. The blood of the Lebanese has irrigated their roots: Saint Cristina of Tyre, martyred in the year 300, Saint Aquilina of Byblos in 293, Saint Tlalaos of Mount Lebanon in 284, Saint Dorothea of Tyre in 362 and many others, were the first fruits of an abundant harvest in Lebanon. Strengthening the foundations of the first Church in Lebanon, the bishops of the coastal cities carefully organized their parishes. They consolidated with strong support the foundations of the new religion and its influence was much more considerable. Thus, Cassios, Bishop of Tyre, took part, at the end of the second century, in a Council charged with discussing the date of the feast of Easter. His successor Marino, according to the historian Eusebius of Caesarea, was the most famous and brilliant of the oriental bishops. The cities of the Lebanese coast were the first to welcome Christianity.

Byblos had as its first bishop Saint John Mark to whom its church was built. Saint Quilina was martyred there. Tripoli also became an established episcopal see, like that of Byblos, by São Paulo.

TRUTHS ABOUT INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL MARONITE HERITAGE

Some truths that have permeated the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the Maronites and guided their historical journey:

- The commitment of the Maronites to the ecumenical vocation that prevailed from the doctrines of the first Councils of the Church, especially with regard to the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon, which confirmed the double nature of Christ in the oneness of his Person.
- The fidelity of the Maronites to their successors in St. Peter's at the Roman Catholic Apostolic See, paying close attention to the particularities of their cultural entity and to their commitment to the unifying journey, with their hands outstretched to the various Christian communities, and precisely to the Christians of the East.
- Open-mindedness, respectful welcome of others, whatever their dogmatic, cultural or other differences. In this, they remain faithful to the principle of respect for the opinion of others, doubly conscious and vigilant, throughout their history of the concept of freedom.

- The commitment of the Maronites to the historical role of perpetuating ancestral traditions, working to bring the East closer to the West and to become the crucible of all the winds of the spirit and the crossroads of civilizations.

- The Maronites' attachment to the land is one of the foundations of their existence and their essence. It is they who, through their own particularities, played a determined role in the formation of their character and personality, and in the structure of their identity.

- The permanent and unfailing attachment of the Maronites to a vision of the world and of history which translates into: being as firm as they are docile, as intransigent as they are tolerant.

- The fight to the death, throughout its long history, for a free existence, a pledge of that freedom, and a doctrine inseparable from its destiny. It is in this sense that it has formed them as they were formed: to be messengers of love and closeness between peoples.

In the history of Christianity, the role of Beirut has been important. Famous for its law school, it was named in Roman times "Mother of Laws" (Beryt Nutrix Legum) and became a center for theological studies. In the history of Christianity, Beirut has played an important role. Famous for its law faculty, it was named in Roman times "Mother of Laws" (Beryt Nutrix Legum) and became a center for theological studies.

The Lebanese mountain was the backbone of the ancient Lebanese religion. All the high places of the mountain were home to a temple. Each village jealously built a shrine to the deity Lebanon can boast the highest density of temples compared to other countries in the world. All of these shrines were dedicated to the worship of the ancient Lebanese triad: El, Adon and Astarte, a triad symbolizing fertility and ever-renewed life. Some famous temples of the Lebanese mountains that have been saved by time have Aramaic, Phoenician or Syriac names. They are the temples of Afka, Hardine, Béchélé, Feu, Ain Ikrine, Bziza, Akroun, Yanouh, Aintoura, Meerab, Beit-Mery, Faqra, Chehim, Bisri and others. Some of these temples overlook the Bekaa valley and are those of the city of Yammouné, Deir-elahmar, Rayak, Fourzol, Niha, Chlifa, Zahlé etc...

The Hermon temples are located in the villages of Deir-el-Ashayer, Hebbaryeh, Helwe, Nabi-Safa, Bakka, Ain Harsha etc...

Not forgetting the temples on the ruins of which were built churches such as those of Edde, Blat, Amioun, Boqsmaya, Akoura, Ehden, Maifouq, Chmat, Deir-el-Kamar, Maad, Amshit, Smar Jbeil, Meshmesh, Hadshit and many others. The proliferation of these temples scattered in large numbers in the different regions of the Lebanese mountains testifies to the presence of man in these regions since ancient times. The existence of numerous tombs carved in the rocks and villages of the Lebanese mountains is also another irrefutable proof. A possible assault on the Lebanese mountain "Baal" was not so easy.

This attempt to preach a new religion and a new conception of life among the conservative inhabitants of the mountain, so fervent in their worship, was, in a way, a risky challenge and full of pitfalls. The religion of the Lebanese at that time, his beliefs and worship, were inspired by the metamorphoses of his natural environment and the configurations of his ethnic environment, thus determined by certain fixed natural constants.

Christianity had spread with relative ease in the coastal cities and the Bekaa plain in order to open the minds of the inhabitants of these regions to anything new. It should not be forgotten that the Lebanese did not find this new doctrine quite strange, which reminded them of certain practices that had been used in their country for a long time. It was therefore up to Christianity - a difficult mission - to reach the sources of ancestral values, to force the sanctuary of the mountain, the strength of the Lebanese. This was the mission attributed to the monks, hermits disciples of a holy man, in search of evangelical perfection and the Absolute. This man of divine inspiration was Saint Maron.

"Saint Maron embellished the divine choir of the Saints. It was he who planted for God the garden that today blossoms in the region of Cyrrhus" (Theodoret of Cyrus)

THE MARONITES AND GREATER LEBANON (1920)

The Peace Conference opened its sessions in Paris on January 18, 1919. The President of the United States asserted the right of each nation to its own destiny and the members of Congress must obey this principle of self-determination of peoples. Historic Lebanon, diminished and stripped of its large coastal cities that constituted its cultural face to the world, and, deprived of other regions of vital economic importance, became Little Lebanon. The Lebanese felt that the time had come to realize their great dream: to recover Greater Lebanon. The Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon, in which all the Lebanese communities were represented under the regime of the "Moutassarrifiats", met on December 1, 1918 and decided to send a delegation to the Peace Conference to demand "the restoration of Lebanon to its historical and natural borders", a demand dictated by its economic interests. The delegation included seven members chaired by Daoud Ammoun, chairman of the board of directors at the time. President Ammoun presented the content of the Council's request to the Conference in a session on February 13, 1919. Having failed to obtain a formal promise to obtain his demands, the president met on May 20, 1918 and decided to proclaim "the political and administrative independence of Lebanon within its geographical and historical borders, and to consider the regions that were taken away from him as part of the country".

Demonstrations took place in Baabda on June 4, 1919, demanding that a delegation be sent to Paris, to be led by the Maronite Patriarch. On June 16, 1919, by decision of the Board of Directors, Patriarch Elias Hwayek went to Paris to lead the second delegation. Petitions from all Lebanese regions asked the Patriarch to speak on behalf of all the Lebanese people. On July 15, 1919, Patriarch Elias Boutros Hwayek left the port of Jounieh aboard a French frigate for Italy. In Rome, the patriarch met Pope Benedict XV who promised him all his help. In Paris, he presented a petition to the Peace Conference on October 25, 1919:

"The recognition of Lebanon's independence proclaimed by the Lebanese government and people on May 20, 1919, the restoration of Lebanon to its historical and natural borders, and the return to Lebanon of the territories that were taken away from it by Turkey. The handing over of the mandate, fixed by the "Versailles" treaty of June 28, 1919, to the government of the French Republic, without alienating Lebanon's sovereignty rights". On November 10, 1919, Clemenceau, then President of the French Council, delivered a letter to Patriarch Hwayek in which he expressed France's agreement to satisfy the demands of the Maronite patriarch, the "high representative" of the Lebanese people. Patriarch Hwayek returned victorious to Lebanon on December 25, 1919. A triumphal, official and popular welcome was reserved for him. At the Patriarch's request, the Board of Directors sent a third delegation to Paris, Monsignor Abdullah el-Khoury, in order to speed up the steps towards the Peace Conference, so that the above-mentioned requests and votes could be approved.

These demands were opposed to those of Emir Faisal who was seeking recognition by the French government as King of Greater Syria. Monsignor Khoury's mission was successful. On August 31, 1920, General Gouraud decreed the restoration of Lebanon within "its geographical and historical borders". On September 1, 1920, Lebanon regained its geographical and historical borders. The Maronites, according to all those who followed this same goal, realized a dream so dear to them that they fought for so long, a dream that guided their historical journey with others, near and far.

This realization of the Lebanese natural entity proclaimed on September 1, 1920, was not only a surface calculated in square kilometers, but also a spiritual and cultural space that drew from the land of Lebanon its structural elements, its values and its characteristics.

The Maronite nation identified itself existentially with this space-cultural entity, for a geographical nation, which defined the Lebanese nation.
The Maronite Patriarch, wishing to emphasize the heritage values of the Land of Lebanon, opted for a historical motto, embellishing the pediment of the Patriarchal See with the following words:

"The glory of Lebanon has been given to him."

LEBANON, LAND OF PROMISES

Lebanon, which means "Heart of God", has been called "land of the gods".
Their religions have shaped the manifestations of their creative genius. The ancient land of the Canaan merchants was an open road for trade and passage for all traders on their long journeys across the Mediterranean bay. They exchanged ideas with the people they visited, as well as shipments of all kinds of products.
On these shores of the Mediterranean, there was a temple. Merchants accepted all the gods as amulets that gave luck in business. No wonder, for the Jewish idea of the one God was also known to the Phoenicians. They recognized it implicitly in their worship of Baal, the Supreme Being, which corresponds to the Jehovah of the Hebrews, Zeus or Chronos of the Greeks, and Jupiter of the Romans. Every year, great feasts were celebrated at Jbail (Bibles) in honor of the pagan gods, which everyone attended, even the peoples of Greece, Egypt, and Rome. How can Lebanon become a cradle of Christian asceticism and the land of Catholic heroism when it was once the land of pagan idolatry?
It is well known that when Christianity became a state religion, the Church, not always happily, erected the worship of its saints in places known as pagan tradition. Christian pilgrimages provided the ancient eulogies, and the cult of the Virgin Mary replaced that of the Lady of the Bibles. If the red waters of the Adonis River reflected the pagan festivals, those of Lebanon's national valley, the Sacred Valley of Kadisha, seem to

accompany the Syriac choirs, in the psalms that have been sung there for centuries by the disciples of Antonio and Hilarão.
And many Christians doubt the childhood and wonder of Jesus:
Where was Jesus from his childhood to the beginning of his mission?
When Jesus was a child playing in the lagoon of Genesaret, how many times did he gaze at the boiling waters of the Jordan River coming from above?
Where is this river born?
You must have once asked a certain pastor.

And the old man said to him:

To train her is to melt the snows of Hermon. This mountain that you see, crowned like an old man, for most of the year, with an immaculate whiteness. It is one of the mountain ranges of Lebanon. Jesus only knew that on the day he began his divine message on earth, he vowed to be baptized in the waters of the river that originates in one of the Lebanese mountain ranges. All we know is that on the day He began His divine message on earth, He vowed to be baptized in the waters of the river that originates in one of the Lebanese mountain ranges. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled: "The rocks of the desert may be missing from the ice of Lebanon". You can see that his memory of Lebanon, in his heart, in all his soul and body, is ancient and distant.
And why did Jesus go to Lebanon?
Did in our land He stop because He was tired?
It must be far away in your memory:

As a child, I heard the Bible reader in the temple:

A gigantic cedar of Lebanon by the water's edge and no tree in paradise is equal to its trace. All the trees of Eden that form God's paradise envied him.

WHO IS LEBANON?

More than a sweet word, the book has become synonymous with light.

More than a spectacle, it entered from the confines of Galilee and saturated his eyes with flowers, petals and white on the summits. And he felt towards Lebanon something more than his first notion of the Father's words and beyond the euphoria emanating from a prodigious vision. His feet would have brushed against the land of Lebanon. He would have prepared himself for contact with the two chains.

And if he came to rest in the lands of Tyre and Sidon, he did so with an earlier knowledge of the mountain of perfumes, having decorated and spelled his name, orally and in writing, to contemplate its summit with ecstasy, to suck its gentle breeze and bathe in its refreshing water. And when he left the boundaries of Tyre, he did not want, says the Gospel, "to stop passing through Sidon. Perhaps he wanted to get to know the people who first sought him out: A glimpse of a book, a beautiful vision, an invigorating breeze and water for his baptism. And it is certain that when He left the land of Lebanon, He continued to sing: And who was the first to ask him for light instead of food and drink?

The mountains bring peace to the people.
And the hills bring mercy.
Come to me and I will come to you.
Try me on this.

That I will give them the gates of heaven,
And I will overflow on you the blessing that does not stop, and all nations will envy you, for you will be a land of promise.

LEBANON COUNTRY OF SAINT CHARBEL

Lebanon is bordered to the north and east by Syria and to the south by Israel, in the region of the Fertile Crescent, where the first great civilizations of mankind emerged. It is the homeland of the Phoenicians, Semitic traders of antiquity, whose maritime culture flourished in the region for more than 2000 years and who created the first alphabet, from which all the others, Semitic and Indo-European, originated. It was the Phoenicians who founded Carthage, Rome's greatest rival in antiquity.

Other important cities were: Tyre, Sidon and the Bibles, which retained their importance during the Roman domination. In the 1st century B.C., Lebanon became part of the Roman Empire, then of the Byzantine Empire, and Christianity was introduced in the region. The Arab conquest of the 7th century introduced the country's current language, Arabic, as well as the Islamic religion.

In the Middle Ages, the territory that is now Lebanon was involved in the crusades when it was contested by the Christians.

West and Muslim Arabs. In the twelfth century, South Lebanon became part of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. It was then occupied by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire in 1516. With the end of the Ottoman Empire, after the end of the First World War, Lebanon was placed under the French mandate confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922. The Lebanese Republic was established in 1926. During World War II, the country was occupied (1941-1945) by French forces supported by the British.

Independence was won in 1945

Hostility between Christian and Muslim groups led to civil war. Lebanon is considered, from a financial and tourist point of view, as the country of Eastern Switzerland.

When you arrive in Beirut by sea, it is with deep emotion that you contemplate its mountains, tinged with light blue, with deep and green valleys, "enchantment of the eyes and joy of the hearts.

Depending on the season and the time of day, its peaks change colors: from pale pink to purple, and at dusk, the sunset is unforgettable with the spectacle of its many colors. In spring, the snow shines on the highest peaks, and its shapes stand out clearly against the blue sky. Its high walls, veiled by the translucent mist that comes from the sea, seem ethereal. Seen from the sky, they look like the Alps, formed undoubtedly by the same terrestrial cataclysms. Deep valleys form from north to south and east to west, highlighting the different mountainous areas.

Orange trees, mulberry trees, palm trees and olive trees grow in all the valleys, all originating from warm countries.

The habitants of this region are excellent farmers, as were the Phoenicians, their predecessors, who soon became sailors, embarking on coastal ships to sell their surplus production. The cities they built along the coast, such as Beirut, Batrun, Jbail (Biblos), Tripoli, as well as Tiro and Sidon, are within walking distance of each other. They appear as steps on a slope, as they were built taking advantage of suitable locations off a fairly even coastline. For centuries and more, there have been markets in these places that have been very skillfully selected long ago. Up to 1,200 meters above sea level, there is an area formed by towns and villages whose houses with Gothic windows are characteristic of this country where you can observe the magnificent spectacle offered by the sea and the multiple gorges of the mountain.

This is the region of tobacco, cereals, potatoes, fruit trees and vines. But what is typically Lebanese are the pines, cypresses and cedars that the Phoenicians used for the construction of their ships and of which, in the temple of king Hiram of Tyre and Solomon's, they covered the hills with a dark mantle that constituted the "glory of Lebanon. Finally, from the 1800 meters, we can see the deep plains and valleys surrounded by majestic snow-covered peaks.

On these peaks are the famous and millennia-old cedars, a precious relic for the Lebanese and whose image carries their national flag. It is the birthplace of Saint Charbel Makhluf which is erected in Santo Nacional. At first glance, Lebanon looks like a fortress, a refuge. The plains of the Lebanese coast are like a fragrant garden, protected by the surrounding hills, humidified by the winds coming from the sea and watered by the crystal clear waters that descend from the mountains, forming rivers of universal renown.

BIBLICAL SIDON

The Bible describes Sidon several times:

* He received his name as the "heir" of Canaan, grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:15, 19).

* It was the first Phoenician house on the coast of Canaan, and because of its extensive trade relations it became a "great" city (Joshua 11:8; 19:28).

- It was the mother city of Tyre. It remained within the domains of the tribe of Assur, but was never subdued (Judges 1:31).

* The Sidonians oppressed Israel (Judges 10:12).

* After the time of David, her glory began to fade and Tyre, her "virgin daughter" (Isaiah 23:12), took her pre-eminent place.

* Solomon established a marriage covenant with the Sidonians and consequently his idolatrous form of worship found a place in the land of Israel (1 Kings 11:12, 33).

* It was famous for its manufacture and arts, as well as for its commerce (1 Kings 5:6; 1 Chronicles 22:4; Ezekiel 27:8).

* (Isaiah 23:2, 4, 12; Jeremiah 25:22; 27:3; 47:4; Ezekiel 27:8; 28:21; 22; 32:30; Joel 3:4).

JESUS CHRIST VISITED LEBANON

Christians find in the reading of the Holy Bible the name of Lebanon.

The Holy Gospels are mentioned:

Jesus visited the "backs" of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21; Mark 7:24; Luke 4:26) and from this region many came to hear him preach (Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17). From Sidon, where the ship docked after leaving Caesarea, Paul finally sailed to Rome (Acts 27:3, 4).

However, Lebanon is mentioned more than seventy times in the Old Testament: "The righteous shall blossom like the palm tree, and grow like the cedar of Lebanon". (Psalm 92:12).

LEBANON AT THE TIME OF SAINT CHARBEL

Father Charbel was 3 years old when the Egyptian troops of Ibrahim Basha invaded Lebanon. Two years later, little Yussef (Charbel's baptismal name) heard his neighbors protest against Ibrahim Basha for the high taxes and forced labor he imposed on these freedom-loving people. In 1840, when he was 12 years old, Europe intervened to force Egypt to evacuate Lebanon.

While Emir Bashir was in power, Lebanon was unified under his iron hand, but soon after his fall, the main Lebanese families tried to regain their former preponderance. Then came the families of the "Sheikhs" of Dahers, Khazens, Dehdahs and Hobeishes; families who imposed the restoration of feudalism on the country, and for this reason, disgruntled peasants complained about its administration, which provoked the Rayfun rebellion. The uprising started unexpectedly among the peasants under the leadership of Tanios Shahin, a blacksmith from Kesrwan, in 1858, and quickly spread to different parts of Lebanon, shedding much innocent blood. At the time these events took place, Charbel had been a monk for about three years.

In 1860, Muslims and Druze* began a bloody persecution against Christians. These crimes against humanity, motivated solely by human passions, were committed under the pretext of religion because they constituted a terrible offense against the Supreme Being.

* The Druze: Originally from Cairo, in the eleventh century, of Shiite origin. The Druze community settled in Syria and Palestine before proselytizing ceased in 1403. A large part of the Druze, faced with the persecution of the Muslim Sounite power, took refuge in Mount Lebanon in the region of Chouf, Metn and Gharb. The Druze and the Maronites constitute the two historical communities of the Lebanese mountains.

Abbot Boulos Naaman, according to his book: "Essay on the Maronites".

How these events were extremely painful for the generous heart of Father Charbel, and how he felt them deeply because they touched his patricians, neighbors and brothers, of race and faith. So great was his sadness and his immense compassion for the unfortunate Christians, his piety reached the most heroic degree, forgiving his enemies and praying for their conversion. Peace quickly regained its place on Lebanese soil and Christians continued to fight for its sanctification.

MONKS FROM THE EAST

After the death of Jesus Christ, Christianity, which at first suffered great opposition and was much discussed, finally triumphed in Rome and its empire, thanks to Emperor Constantine. Struggling against the morality of paganism in Alexandria, many Christians sought a place in the desert where they could live according to the Gospel precepts, for anyone who wishes to find the truth must also practice it in all its vigor. "Antonio the Great" found in the desert this wonderful spiritual kingdom of monarchism that had spread throughout the land. The Christianity that arrived in Egypt with the first apostles was brought to Gaza by Hilariao, the founder of Syrian monarchism. St. Jerome informs us that Hilariah, who belonged to a family of pagans, had been sent to Alexandria to study the humanities. He showed a remarkable intelligence for living a holy life, and having heard of Antonio's fame, he embraced the faith of Christ.

Immediately, he wanted to go to the desert to meet the Holy Anacoreta, and lived with him for two years; but finding the Saint in the company of many other men of God, he decided to return to his city, Gaza, and live there in solitude. There he began his ascetic life, fasting and struggling against the flesh, cultivating the land and singing hymns of praise to God. He knew Holy Scripture by hearing it aloud as if God was present.

He became famous all over the country, and the healing of the son of a noble lady, on returning from a visit to his great friend Antonio, brought his fame to the Palace of the Emperors. After announcing the news of this miracle, people ran to Hilariah with such enthusiasm that many embraced the Christian faith and vowed to live as hermits. In spite of their austerity, Hilariao welcomed everyone, often smiling to win them over to the Christ. After his death, his body remained incorruptible, exhaling a perfume of life and holiness that had amazed everyone. In northern Syria, too, monastic life was adopted early on Kalaat Smhab, still manifests with its ruins the glory of monarchism with Simeon Stylita, who imagined a way of life that is still regarded with wonderful disbelief by many. In fact, this holy anchorite settled on a column three to four meters high, the upper part of which was wide enough to lie down. This hermit remained there day and night, exposed to the elements, usually with his shovel, his arms raised to the sky and ready for worship. Like other great mystics of his time, this hermit lived in absolute contempt for everything except the Eucharist, which a priest brought him once a week.

It may seem incredible, but there are similar examples in the life of St. Catherine, and more recently of Catherine Emmerich and Teresa Newman. In the year 459, this saint died in her column, while he was in adoration, as was his daily custom. In the life of Saint Charbel, we find many traces similar to this hermit and to another who lived at the time of Saint Maron that the inhabitants of Lebanon inherited the name of Maronites. This great saint always led a life of penance and prayer, he lived on a mountain north of Antioch and near a pagan temple that he transformed into an oratory. Most of the anchorites in the Tyre region were his disciples. During his exile in Armenia, Saint John Chrysostom wrote to him to beg him to be present in his prayers. He died in the year 410. His remains were preserved religiously, according to a custom of the time. In the place where the saint died, they built a church and a monastery. The latter was huge and, for its beauty, it was called the Convent of Crystal (Dair El-Nannour). Thanks to the generosity of the pilgrims, this convent has a treasure trove of precious stones and a large number of gold and silver objects. Up to 800 monks preached the Gospel throughout the region; of these, 350 were massacred because of the Faith, and Lebanon celebrates its feast day with great splendor on July 31. This event of Saint Maroun was the main event of the monastic federations of Lower Syria, with the superiors having priority over the superiors of other convents. When the Muslim invasion spread throughout Syria and the eastern valley, the Maronites sought refuge in Lebanon.

Their monks took in their company the relics of Saint Maron, protector of their monastery. These relics were venerated in Kfer-Hai, near Batrun, until the time of the Crusades and were transported to the Abbey of the Holy Cross near Foligo, Italy. The possession of these relics and the feeling of protection of the time inspired the presence of the monks, and among them was a strong moral support for the isolated mountain people, threatened in their convent, made in the rocks by the destructive action of the Muslims on the neighboring countries. They had confidence in the protection of San Maron, and were saved. The seat of the Maronite Patriarchate was established in Kannubin in 939, although already in the 8th century there were several churches in Lebanon. Lebanon, whose religious foundations were laid by a monk, is still a country of monks. Each tomb, and there are many in Lebanon, usually serves as the cornerstone of a convent. In this country, as in the time of the primitive churches, men of God were very attached to the inhabitants of each town or village and shared with them their work and labors. Like the Good Shepherd, the priest here "knows the sheep and calls them by name. The village priest, the father superior of the monastery, the monk of the convent, is called "abuna" (our father), and by kissing his anointed hand, the faithful perform a filial act, for in oriental families it is customary for children to kiss their parents' hands. The simplicity so sincerely evangelical, the spontaneous warmth, the natural charity, the Christian gentleness, in a word, the humanity of these true shepherds, produce in the Western Christian who knows them, a pleasant surprise and deep joy, when he has the good fortune to come into contact with them.

This undoubtedly explains why Westerners, when they met the Holy Monk Charbel, had the impression of being overwhelmed by his heroic holiness, since Monk Charbel is a characteristic figure of the Lebanese Church as well as of morality and Jesus Christ.

FROM THE EAST, A STAR WAS BORN

As humanity climbs the vituperative summits of wisdom and pride, in this Lebanese land where the eternally green thousand year old cedar tree hides a mysterious fragment of immense and seductive sweetness, which we talk about to make us think about choosing the right path. In the most hidden part of the Lebanese mountain, a convent, without pretension or false garland, shelters the remains of the one who was in life, humble, fervent and obedient son of the Most High: the servant of God, Charbel makhlouf, who waits in eternity, if it is God's will, for the crown of holiness to be imposed on him. For many years, a dry and parched track brought to Saint Maron d'Annaya the few travelers who dared to go there: peasants, shepherds and brothers. In summer, the sun burned the travelers with its caustic rays; in winter, the rain wet them completely. Dust and mud, burning sun and cold water were the company of the poor pilgrims on their way to Annaya. Today, a paved road, through which all classes of vehicles circulate, unites the beautiful and dynamic capital of Lebanon, Beirut, with this humble and until recently unknown mountainous place.

Going to Annaya is no longer a painful and unpleasant journey, but a beautiful walk. Hundreds of cars take the road that connects the capital to the historic convent that houses the remains of the holy man of God. In 1950, a real fever seized the environment. Everyone wanted to visit the tomb of the humble brother who dedicated his life to the service of God, and whose incorruptible body performed extraordinary wonders that could only be explained in the sense of miracles. Charbel Makhluf had died more than a century ago; his body, however, is in perfect condition. Corrupted body, says the technique; miracles of conservation, says the faith. This incorruptible body of the man of God exhales a very special sweat. It is a kind of aqueous substance mixed with blood. Science, with all its advances, cannot explain the phenomenon. Faith has a simple but exact word: Miracle... Miracle of God through His beloved servant.

THE SHINING STAR OF SAINT CHARBEL

A new star has appeared in the East, the birthplace of saints and prophets. Man has always been attracted to God, and in such a profound way that he did not understand Him, arriving in ancient times to build a temple in honor of the sun in the city of Baalbek, to worship Him. But when the true Son of God illuminated the world with the light of His Glory in the person of His only Son, the Magi, led by the shining star, arrived at the manger of Belem where they worshipped the Creator of Light, and a new era began.

The brightness of this star was so dazzling that it dispelled the darkness of hearts and minds, acknowledging to the sun worshippers that the Messiah was the true Light, and they greeted him with poems of praise saying:

"Hail Christ, Light of the world"

And from that distant East, the Apostles set out one day, travelling the earth, and like new stars they reflected the word of God.

CHARBEL, HIS BIRTH

AND ITS MONASTIC VOCATION

At the foot of a series of mountains in Fam El-Mizab, the highest point of the Lebanese peaks, eternally covered with snow, is a village called Bekaa-Kafra, at 1600 meters of altitude, which is the highest of the villages in Lebanon and the closest to the woods of the famous cedars. The inhabitants of this village are Maronites, almost all of whom belong to the Makhluf family. The village of Bekaa-Kafra, birthplace of Saint Charbel. At the beginning of the 19th century, a peasant named Antonio Makhluf lived in this village. His wife, Brígida, was the daughter of Antonio Jacob Chidiac, in the town of Besharre. They had three children: Jean, Beshara and Youssef, the youngest being born on May 8, 1828. They also had two daughters, Kuna and Rosa.

Antonio Makhlouf died on August 8, 1831, leaving his children in the care of an uncle named Antonio Zaarur Makhluf, who tried to educate them religiously in the Holy Fear of God. Youssef was 3 years old when his father died and had to help the family in its survival tasks. Since his childhood, little José showed a deep inclination to the contemplative life and piety, often hiding in the most complex rocks that surrounded the city, spending many days there praying and doing penance. During his adolescence, he felt the desire to withdraw into monastic life and soon followed the example of two maternal uncles, Agustín and Daniel Chidiac, who lived holy in the monastery of Kozhaya where he went for the first time. Nothing and no one hijacked his complete and perfect decision to become a monk. Nothing prevented him from abandoning everything and going towards Christ. Shortly afterwards, Youssef was discovered by his relatives, who did their utmost to persuade him to abandon his vocation, but obtained nothing. He was 23 years old when he began to realize his life project, which he kept secret. He decided to leave his family, his friends and his village to follow alone the path he had chosen. His long solitary walk across the arduous mountain of Tannurin did not deter him from his decision, he wanted to enter religious life. The convent of Kfifan is the sanctuary where the monk makes his final choice, writing, praying and studying and where he decides to follow the monastic life.

It was impossible for Joseph to respond to the call of monastic life as a child, because his uncle and his guardian strongly opposed his desire, remaining negative until the majority of the little one. Joseph was finally able to escape from his uncle by going to the monastery of Saint Maroun in Annaya, where he settled with great joy among the Lebanese monks in 1851. He adapted easily to monastic life and was soon received at the novitiate. He chose the name Charbel in honor of Saint Charbel, martyr of the church of Antioch, who died for the faith in the year 107 during the reign of Emperor Trajan and whose feast is celebrated in the Maronite rite on September 5th.

HIS MONASTIC VOCATION

We know the youth of Saint Charbel through his religious vocation which has always existed as the true essence of his life. Periodically, he would isolate himself from the world by going to a grotto or to the cedars that were near his village, and there he would devote himself to penance and prayer. But he was not the first to manifest his vocation in this way, for Lebanon was the cradle of many souls who consecrated themselves to God. In a small neighboring village, Hasroun, a boy was born who also prayed in this humble chapel still preserved as a relic. His name was Youssef Assemhani, and he became a great sage, a renowned philologist and one of the most famous orientalists of the time, being appointed "Curator" of the Vatican Library by His Holiness Pope Clement XII.

He was then sent to the East as censor of the reform committee that would attempt to correct ecclesiastical discipline. He became Chaamelán of the Pope, prelate of the Vatican, official historian of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, and patron of that Kingdom. His manuscripts of oriental studies today form a monument as a scientific work and source of knowledge for new lovers of oriental things. The fate of Youssef Makhluf would be even more brilliant on earth, but his vocation was much greater than that of a genius, it was that of a predestined one. The love of prayer, study and solitude were already signs of his monastic vocation. He quickly understood that neither the life of his village nor that of his family could hold longer a soul as restless as that of our Saint Charbel. He also realized that it was only by staying with his family that he ran the great risk of losing his soul, or making it sterile and infertile because of material worries.

We could enjoy a lot of peace if we avoid the consolation of the world, it is very harmful to our inner and divine consolation. We can enjoy a lot of peace without worrying about external facts that do not belong to our world.Blessed are the simple people, for they will have much peace. Why have many saints been perfect and contemplative?

Because they sought to mortify themselves in all earthly desires, and thus they were able, in the depths of their hearts, to unite with God and freely attend to themselves.

However, we take too much care of our own passions and are preoccupied with material and ephemeral things. It is rare that we can perfectly conquer even a single vice; we do not inflame ourselves with the desire to progress every day, hence the coldness and monotony in which we remain. As long as we live in this world, we will not be able to be safe from temptations. However, these temptations are very useful to man because they humiliate us, purify us and instruct us.

All the saints went through many temptations and took advantage of them; those who could not bear them were reproved and perished.

There is no such thing as a holy order or a secluded place where there are no temptations and adversities. No man is completely free from temptations as long as he lives, for it is in himself that they arise: the lust into which we are born. As soon as one temptation has passed, another comes, and we will always have to suffer, for we have lost the gift of primitive happiness. Saint Charbel instilled in his mind how costly it is to lose an inveterate custom, and no one renounces in good spirit the way he sees it. If you trust your reason and your talent more than the grace of Jesus Christ, you will be enlightened only rarely and late; for God wants us to submit perfectly to Him and to rise above all human reason, inflamed with His love. And the Holy Charbel knew how to love the world even in isolation from the world, because he who loves does so very much.

He does well who serves the common good more than his own will. He has renounced many things, even abandoning his family to have peace and harmony with others. It is no small thing to live in monasteries and even more so to isolate oneself from the world in order to be in direct contact with God. It is a matter of living in the hermitage without complaining and persevering until death. If you want to remain firm and progress, consider yourself a pilgrim on earth. It is good to be crazy for the love of Christ if you want to follow religious life. It is the change of customs and the perfect mortification of the passions that make a true religious. Whoever seeks something other than God alone and the salvation of his soul, will find only tribulation. He cannot remain at peace for long if he does not seek to be the least and most submissive of all. You have come to serve and not to command; remember that you have been called to work and suffer, not to rest and talk. Here, then, men prove themselves, like gold in the furnace. Here, no one will persevere unless he wants to humble himself with all his heart for the love of God. This is what Saint Charbel did: One Sunday, without provisions and without taking at least what is necessary for life, he left the house. He chose neither Kozhaya, nor Kannoubin, nor other convents close to his lands, but the monastery of Saint Maron d'Annaya, located near a small village like his, built in stone without polishing, and which was simple and somewhat unpleasant for those who had to live within its walls.

When Charbel knocked on the door of the monastery, the superior was reading the Holy Scriptures. The doorman announced the visit of a tall, shy and somewhat modest looking young man who asked to speak to him. Here, the words of the evangelical saint came true: "Beat and you shall be opened". The abbot met young Joseph in the small courtyard of the convent and, smiling, asked him : What do you want, my son?

The young man, somewhat moved, answered him: I have become a brother and one of your sons. Shortly afterwards, he approached his superior and gently kissed his hands. In Annaya, young Youssef was in his element.

He felt no remorse for having abandoned his mother. Remorse implies lack, and he knew that lack would exist if he had disobeyed God who was calling him to solitude.

"He who loves his father and mother more than I do is not worthy of me."

He certainly thought a lot about his loved ones, but he was convinced that God would take care of them, because for love of God he had abandoned them.

BROTHER CHARBEL, STUDENT

In his youth, Brother Charbel was a perfect man. His companions can speak of him as a model student, not as an intellectual of a speculative student, but as a wise man seeking the truth. In the West, the holiness and erudition of the Eastern Church is unknown. Western Christians have even forgotten that the name (Kanisat Boutros), "Church of Peter," has its origin in the East. It was in the East that the new evangelical thought defeated the old pagan thought with the same weapons, adapting to the Greek language the subtle interpretations of Christian dogmas, especially that of the Holy Trinity. The conflict between the two schools of thought settled the whole history of the Eastern Churches, and the higher studies that Brother Charbel did at the Kfifan School, on the orders of the erudite Father Neemtatallah El-Kafri, helped him enormously. This is why we can imagine the peasant of Bekaa-Kafra, an enthusiastic and fervent cultivator of the history of his Church, of the life and work of its saints, of its theologians and philosophers, penetrating the deep secrets of all these saints who were the legitimate heirs of his secular civilization.

Very early on, his superiors sent him to the monastic school of the convent of Saint Cyprian in Kfifan. There he studied Syriac theology, moral and dogmatic, as well as other branches of knowledge, under the guidance of competent masters, all of their own order, famous for the wisdom and sanctity of their lives.

One of these teachers was Father Neemtallah El-Hardini, who died a saintly death on December 14, 1858 in the convent of Kfifan. The official investigation into the sanctity of his life and miracles was undertaken in 1926 by order of the competent ecclesiastical authority and he was canonized as a saint by the Holy Father John Paul II.His professor of theology and Syriac was the pious and erudite Father Neemtallah El-Afri, the man of great reputation. Brother Charbel always distinguished himself among his companions in the study of theology and surpassed them in the practice of the virtues. His studies in Kfifan gave him the opportunity to familiarize himself with the sacred scriptures, which he endeavored to read every day. The spiritual life of the hermit has always been widely involved:

- A deep liturgical life - Meditation on the Holy Scriptures (the Word of God) - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - devotion to the Mother of God. He knew the spiritual fertility of the Psalms, which the hermits of Kadisha sang for centuries, making their voices resound in the "Valley of the Saints". His deep knowledge of the Syriac language allowed him to appreciate the great works of Saint Ephrem, this great doctor of the Syriac Church, and the beloved of the Maronites, who owe a great part of their liturgy to him.

They called him "The Voice of the Holy Spirit".

He wrote a great number of verses in Syriac, mainly for the glorification of the Virgin Mary. Like all Lebanese, Saint Charbel was a faithful and fervent devotee of the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady of Lebanon is the patron and protector of the Maronites, and there is not a single Lebanese Christian who does not have the venerable image of Our Lady in his home. It would be enough to attend the month of Mary in Lebanon to understand how deep the love of this people for the Blessed Mother of Jesus is. Saint Charbel loved with all his heart his sweet and heavenly Lady, who smiled at his difficulties and consoled him in his temptations. He never stopped praying the Rosary in its entirety, and his lips never stopped pronouncing Our Lady's name, repeating it with confidence and associating it with the names of Jesus and Joseph on his deathbed. Without a doubt, the Virgin Mary listened to her faithful servant, whom she now glorifies throughout the world. Once he entered the convent of Annaya, he was completely isolated from the world, and from then on he was known only by his religious name, Charbel, the same name as that of the former martyr of Antioch. At the monastery, he was a postulant under the direction of a superior, he followed the rule of the Order with absolute fidelity, and he did his utmost to elevate what was still human in him. He goes to the novitiate, taking another step towards the heights, which he will conquer gradually and not without great difficulty. His stages in this spiritual development are still little known.

He never had the idea, like so many others, of writing his "Memoirs" or his Confessions to publish what should be God's secret. Brother Charbel always distinguished himself among his companions in the study of theology, and surpassed them in the practice of virtues, especially in humility and strict observance of monastic orders. A man of prayers for excellence, a man of spiritual ecstasy.

CHARBEL, THE MONK

After his ordination, the monk Charbel was again sent by his superiors to the monastery of Annaya where, after his novitiate, he took the religious habit. There he spent 16 years among his brothers before retiring to the hermitage of the monastery where he remained for more than 29 years, that is, until the end of his life. During his stay at the monastery, the monk Charbel had tried with all his heart to unite with Christ. He tried to strictly respect the monastic rule and religious vows. He was exceptional, especially for his capacity of prayer, obedience and total abnegation. Fearing that his spiritual fervor might diminish, and even his piety, he preferred, before dying, to abandon his monastery, or to live outside it, if only for a moment. He loved nothing more than to spend as much time as possible in his humble little chapel, kneeling at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, absorbed in deep meditation, without feeling the slightest fatigue.

He said he was a seraphim, not a man, that was his way of praying. "Whenever I was among men less man, I returned" (Seneca, Epist.7)".

In silence the pious soul progresses and the secrets of the Scriptures are learned. There it finds the source of the tears, with which it washes and purifies itself all night long to unite itself all the more closely with the Creator as it moves away from the turmoil of the world. Thus, he who distances himself from his friends and acquaintances will see God coming nearer with his holy angels. It is better to be alone and take care of one's soul than to perform miracles by neglecting it. The religious who rarely goes out, who flees from being seen by men and does not even try to see them, deserves praise. His separation from the world was absolute. When he took his religious vows at the monastery of Saint Maron in Annaya, his mother went to the monastery and asked for him. Brother Charbel apologized and addressed him briefly from inside the chapel, without her being able to see him, because she was also seeing his holy mother. hen Father Charbel's mother went to see him, he did not want to see her. Through the door and without opening it, he said to her:

"Mother, we will be in heaven for an eternity."

For us, ordinary human beings, Father Charbel's answer seems hard from a son to his mother, but if we put it in the plan of Faith, it is not such a hard answer because he gave his mother a reward:

"Let us see in heaven. He promised her the heaven"!

She said, "Is it so, my son, that you deprive me of the pleasure of being able to kiss him and hold you to my breast?

The holy Charbel consumed her eyes with tears. This decision shows the total abandonment of Saint Charbel to everything he influenced his youth, his family, his village where he never returned. Obey unconditionally, because Love for God is unconditional, it is Love without limits. Before Abraham existed, I AM (John 8:58). As a man walked on the earth. But such stature and distinction could surely suggest a stoic, unfeeling and absolute personality. After his ordination to the priesthood, a group of relatives and friends who went to ask him to visit them responded with holy simplicity: "The religious who visits his relatives and friends after making profession must begin again by becoming a brother. "Blessed is he who understands what it is to love Jesus and to despise himself for the love of Jesus. For this love you must leave all others, for Jesus wants to be loved above all else. The love of the creature is deceitful and fickle; the love of Jesus is faithful and unshakeable. Attached to the creature, you will fall with the unstable one; embraced by Jesus, you will be firm forever. He loves you and keeps you as a friend who will not forsake you when all forsake you, nor consent to your perishing in the supreme hour. You will all be separated one day, whether you like it or not.

Come close to Jesus in life and in death; give yourself to His faithfulness, which only He can help you when you are all in need. Your beloved is of such a nature that he admits no rival: he only wants to possess your heart and reign as king on his throne. If you knew how to detach yourself from every creature, Jesus would find pleasure in living with you. When you trust men outside of Jesus, you will see that you are lost. Do not trust in quicksand: for all flesh is hay, and all its law. If you seek to relieve others and take advantage of them, you will almost always be a loser. Seek Jesus in all things, and Jesus will find you. If you seek yourself, you will also find yourself, but at your loss. For the man who does not seek Jesus hurts himself more than the whole world and his enemies. In their monastery, the monks used to get up at midnight to recite the canonical trades; then the monks would retire back to their cells to rest until five o'clock in the morning, when they would get up again for morning prayers. Charbel, however, remained in communication with God the rest of the night, and did not leave the church until after celebrating Holy Mass, which he did after attending all the Masses celebrated by his brothers. His profound humility was evident in his whole person, especially during the celebration of Holy Mass, where he resembled an angel more than a man, such was his contemplation of the great mysteries of Calvary. To get an idea of how the saints pray, one only has to see Father Charbel celebrate Holy Mass. Rosary.

His devotion to the Virgin Mary was such that he never failed to recite the Holy. We can say that Father Charbel, because of his poverty, was a faithful imitator of Christ. He truly lived as the poorest of the poor, both in terms of food and clothing, and everything he had in his cell breathed the greatest poverty. The habit he had chosen for himself was one of the most humble, and although it was patched up, it shone with cleanliness. Although he lived at an altitude of 1,400 meters, his clothes were always the same, in winter and summer. As for food, even the hungriest could not eat what our Saint ate. He had the hardest bread in reserve for him, and the half spoiled fruits, he never ate meat during his religious life. As for wine, although he took care of the monastery's vineyards, he never drank it, for he never sucked grapes except by order of the Superiors.

Man's happiness does not consist in the abundance of temporal goods, it only requires mediation. Living on earth is a real misery. The more man wants to be spiritual, the more bitter his present life will be, because he knows better and sees more clearly the defects of human corruption. "To eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to work and to be subjected to all other great miseries and afflictions for the spiritual man who wants to be free from this and free from all sin". "Yes, very oppressed is the inner man with bodily needs in this world. That is why the prophet devoutly prays to God to free him from them, saying, "Deliver me, O Lord, from my needs" (Ps 24:17).

But woe to those who do not know their misery, and woe to those who love this miserable and corruptible life, for there are some who are so attached to it - since they can hardly get what they need with work or almsgiving - that if they could live here permanently, nothing would be given to them from the kingdom of God". She never had any money on hand, and when someone offered her the Holy Mass allowance, she made sure it was given to her companion. When they made it their duty to give it to her personally, he stretched out his arm and hid the gift between his sleeves without seeing what it was, giving it to Father Macarius. And what will we say about his angelic purity?

The efforts he made to preserve this beautiful virtue with every human effort. Prolonged fasts, extraordinary penances, as well as his on No one has ever seen him displeased, nor heard him murmur against the manners of the Superior, nor of any of his brothers. "It´s a great thing to live in obedience, under the direction of a superior, and not to have one's own will. It is much safer to obey than to command. Many obey more out of necessity than out of love: that is why they suffer and murmur easily. They will only attain freedom of spirit when they submit with all their heart, for the love of God. Walk where you will: you will find no rest but in humble submission and obedience to your superior. The imagination of places and changes of many has been mistaken. It is true that everyone likes to follow his own opinion and is more inclined to follow those who share his opinion.

However, if God is with us, we must sometimes renounce our opinion in the name of peace.

Who is wise enough to know everything completely?

So don't rely too much on your own judgment, but also be careful of the judgment of others. If your opinion is good and you let it, for God's sake, follow the opinion of others, you will get something out of it. He lived there for 15 years as a model monk for the faithful observance of the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as well as the regulations of the convent itself. He dedicated his life to prayer, manual work, and constant communication with God our Lord. He was of exemplary austerity, mortifying himself in the way he ate and dressed, always keeping a holy silence, interrupted when it was a matter of the glory of God or the sanctification of souls. It was Brother Charbel, and it was his life in Annaya, the perfect model of the monks, who found in him a stimulus to seek only their own sanctification.

IN THE HERMITAGE

When Father Charbel's superiors saw the perfection with which he practiced the monastic virtues, they allowed him to retreat to a hermitage, built at the top of Mount Annaya, 1,400 meters above sea level, thus satisfying a long-lasting and ardent desire of this servant of God to live in the solitude of the desert.

It was a hermitage, known as the Hermitage of St. Peter and St. Paul, it seemed suspended between heaven and earth and resembled a lighthouse, illuminating valleys and mountains from above. This hermitage is annexed to the convent of Saint Maron in Annaya. Father Charbel entered it in 1875 and never abandoned it, except when he was forced to do so by his superiors in the name of holy obedience. Here, in this solitude, he followed in the footsteps of the ancient hermits of other times, like Saint Anthony the Great, prototype and predecessor of the monks, and like Saint Paul, the first hermit, giving himself totally to prayer and meditation, practicing bodily discipline, wearing a cilice as clothing and sleeping on the hard ground. He ate only once a day, eating the food left by his hermit companions, who in turn ate the remains of the monks of the monastery of St. Maron. During all the time Father Charbel lived in the solitary hermitage, he always kept that austerity of life, so pleasing to God, for which God honored him with the power to perform miracles. Father Charbel stayed 23 years in the hermitage as if he had died, because in reality he lived on earth with his body, in heaven, but with his heart and mind, until he united with the hermits who preceded him and who now enjoy in heaven the prize and reward of the souls of the righteous. Saint Charbel knew how to interpret the teachings of Christ :

If you know how to leave men, they will let you do your good deeds.

Do not meddle in the affairs of others, nor do you meddle in the affairs of great men. Always look at yourself first and admonish yourself more particularly than all your friends. If you know how to leave men, they will let you do your good deeds. Do not meddle in the affairs of others, nor do you meddle in the affairs of great men. Always look at yourself first and admonish yourself more particularly than all your friends. Do not be saddened by the lack of human favor, but penalize yourself for not living as prudently and cautiously as is proper for a servant of God and a follower of religion. It is more useful and safer for man not to have many comforts in this life. However, if we do not have, or rarely have, divine consolation, it is our own fault, for we do not seek the compunction of the heart, nor do we reject all vain outward consolations.

HERMIT, A MAN MORTIFIED IN SPIRIT

Only strong, experienced and deeply contemplative souls can face and persist in this kind of life. Indeed, the hermit must face many temptations and struggle daily to discipline his body and soul, to free himself and direct all his activity towards the invisible God. The hermit serves and enriches the Mystical Body of Christ as well as the world from which he came, through prayer, penance and silence, so that the message of Christ may be better heard. He renounces the world and sin in order to meditate with simplicity and humility on the mysteries of God immanent in his being and which he tries to reach in a transcendent way.

In the dark night of the spirit, he lives in hope and the light of this vision that will never end. But all this does not constitute all of Father Charbel's heroism. His immense charity forced him to become more like Christ. The life of our hermit is a clear demonstration for our generation that the virtues of these great loners are not legendary. It was consummated in the desire to obtain permission to become a hermit. His superiors, considering that he had already obtained all the religious virtues, finally granted him what he desired. To become a hermit is by definition, according to our rule, to belong totally to God; to die not only for the world, but also for the consolation of living among the brothers, and to bring the practice of religious virtues to their highest heroism. For 29 years, Father Charbel imitated in his poor hermitage the life of St. Anthony the Great and St. Paul the first hermit, whose life never tired of reading and meditating.

The only difference between them was the following:

While St. Anthony the Great and St. Paul were true hermits, Father Charbel was always under the orders of the superiors of the monastery of Annaya, and during his life a brother brought him food once a day. This food was sometimes composed of raw vegetables, sometimes simply cooked without any spices. He spent most of the day and night in prayer, in deep meditation before the Blessed Sacrament, reading the lives of the Saints, working and forcing himself so as not to lose any of the merit of Holy Obedience.

In short, during his life as a hermit, he was subject to his superiors who gave him their orders, so that everything he did was motivated only by obedience. He obeyed the last of the brothers as if he were the Superior. Brother Jawade, who was still alive, tells us about an interesting case that occurred with Father Macarius. Macarius was working in the monastery's vineyard, and when the oxen passed by, Father Macarius was killed. raised to protect them. It happened that an ox broke a branch of the vine, despite all the efforts of Father Charbel. As a result of all this, Father Macarius got bored and told Father Charbel : "It happened thanks to you."

The good Father Charbel, without saying a word, knelt down with his arms on the cross: "Forgive me for the love of God."

Mortified in spirit, Father Charbel also mortified himself. The same eyewitness tells us the following:

The pillow was a piece of cardboard wrapped in an old habit.The deckchair in the chapel was a bundle of clothes. One day he entered the hermit's cell and saw his bed. It was made of oak leaves covered with a layer of straw.

After the death of the Holy Father Charbel, Brother Jawade was fortunate enough to discover the clothes he wore day and night during his hermetic life. He was one of the most humble people we know. The pieces of this clothing that were distributed have already done many miracles.

GIANT IN HIS LIFE GIANT IN HIS DEATH

Giant in his obedience, giant in his life trajectory, giant in his death. Like the spear that pierced the chest of Jesus Christ on the cross, blood and water still exhale from the body of Saint Charbel Makhluf. Jesus had no place to sleep, he laid his head on a stone. Saint Charbel slept with his head leaning against a wooden plank for four hours at the most; he spent the night until dawn reading the Holy Bible, meditating and talking with God. The next day, he woke up in the early hours of the morning to celebrate Holy Mass with the other companions of the Convent. All day long he worked in the fields, harvesting wheat, grapes, tobacco and other plants. In the miraculous photo that is the cover of the book we can see that he has one left shoulder more inclined than the other, a sign of so many harvest loads.

HIS DEATH

The Holy Father Charbel heroically preserved all the acts of asceticism that had been imposed on him. In spite of its great privatizations, remained perfectly until 1898. On December 16 of that year, Saint Charbel began the Holy Mass after the usual 5 hours of preparation. Before the consecration, he felt a tremor in his whole body. His companion, Father Macarius, seeing that he could not continue, made him sit down for a moment. It was only for a moment; the pious hermit went back to the altar and continued the Holy Mass. At the small elevation, he felt sick again, but so sick that he could not continue the Holy Sacrifice.

He kept the chalice and the host elevated, with his eyes fixed on the Cross, remaining as if it were a statue. Father Macarius, not without great effort, succeeded in persuading him to leave the Holy Altar and go to his room. After this, Father Macarius returned to continue the Holy Mass, since the consecration had been made, and the celebrant could not finish because he fell ill or felt ill, another priest had to complete the office. Saint Charbel, the hermit, was attacked by paralysis. It was his first and last illness. For eight days, and inasmuch as he was allowed to move his lips, he never tired of repeating the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the prayer of the Mass that he had to interrupt because of his illness: "O Father of Truth, here is your son, sacrificed for praising you. Receive him, for he dies for me". With these words the servant of God gave up his soul. Father Macarius and Father Michel Abi-Ramia, a secular priest from Ehmege, assisted him at the last hour and gave him the last sacraments. They could not fail to note in this last prayer of the hermit his desire to be immolated by Christ, to die in perfect union with his Savior, in the essential act of representing the Passion of Christ, to participate in the redemptive act of Jesus, to live with Him for all eternity. In the minds of those who knew him alive and dead, there is no doubt about his holiness. Saint Charbel placed his angelic soul in the hands of God on December 24, 1898. His body was buried in the common cemetery of the brothers, he was buried with all his habits and his coffin.

His religious brothers and the inhabitants of the neighboring villages accompanied his body to the grave as if he was a saint. His religious brothers and people from nearby villages accompanied his body to the tomb as if he were a saint.

PASSIONNANT WORDS

The high priest, in the register of monks' deaths, noted in his own hand: "I am not writing anything about the life of this monk, what he will do after his death, I apologize for giving details about his life". A few months after his death, a light shone above the tomb of St. Charbel, and it was the Muslim neighbors who warned the high priest, saying they saw the light appear several times. Saint Charbel appeared while Father Superior was sleeping and told him to open the tomb. Father Superior, without asking permission from any ecclesiastical authority, opened the tomb and saw water and blood flowing in abundance. The miracles he performed during his life and those that continue to be performed after his death confirm the fact that God wants to glorify his faithful servant, Saint Charbel. At that time, miraculous events began to occur, facts that could not be explained by the laws of nature, because they exceeded all that was natural. All these events attracted the attention of the Superior Father of the convent, Father Antonio Al Mishimshani, who immediately tried to communicate with the Superior General of the Lebanese Maronite Order, who in turn

communicated all these events to his Beatitude, Patriarch Elias Hwayek, and told him requested permission to open a new tomb and to have Saint Charbel's remains buried in a special tomb, so that they would not be confused with the remains of other deceased monks. I told him that I had known Saint Charbel very well and that I had always considered him as a holy hermit, full of virtues and that I did not doubt that very soon he would be raised to the honor of the altars. The Patriarch accepted the request without hesitation. In 1926, the process of beatification was presented in Rome. At that time, the order was given to bury him again.

EXHUMATION OF HIS BODY

AND REQUEST FOR BEATIFICATION

A few months after the death of Saint Charbel, miraculous events began to occur in his tomb, facts that could not be explained by the laws of nature, because they exceeded all that was natural. All these events attracted the attention of the superior of the convent, Father Antonio Al-Mishimshani, who immediately tried to contact the superior general of the Lebanese Maronite Order. He communicated all these events to His Beatitude Patriarch Elias Hwayek, and asked him for permission to open a new tomb and to bury the mortal remains of Saint Charbel in a special tomb, so that they would not be confused with those of other deceased monks. I told him that I had known Saint Charbel very well and that I had always considered him as a holy hermit, full of virtues and that I did not doubt that very soon he would be raised to the honor of the altars. The Patriarch granted this request without hesitation. The tomb was opened in the presence of the Superior and the monks of the Convent, as well as some curious people from the neighboring villages, who are never absent on these occasions. Its monastic habits were also intact, although the cemetery was flooded several times due to the heavy rains, very frequent in the East. His body was therefore exposed to the bad weather of groundwater for several months. All those present recognized the body as being that of Saint Charbel, there is no doubt about it. His body was solemnly carried away, in the midst of astonishment and respect of all

those present, who repeated and spontaneously exclaimed:

"This is the body of Saint Charbel was certainly a Saint during his life, and now, after his death, God honors him by keeping his incorruptible body. The body was placed in a wooden coffin and placed in a corner of the monastery chapel.

SWEAT AND BLOOD

The exhumation of Saint Charbel's body was accompanied by a strange prodigy. The body gave off a bloody sweat, a kind of mixture of red and white blood cells, the latter being more abundant. There was also a strong smell of blood flooding the chapel, which was perceived by all those who went there to pray. The consequence of all this was that the monks were obliged to change Saint Charbel's clothes twice a week to avoid stains. As this miracle continued, the news spread even outside the convent, awakening a deep interest in all souls. The exhumation of Saint Charbel's body was accompanied by a strange prodigy. The body gave off a bloody sweat, a kind of mixture of red and white blood cells, the latter being more abundant. There was also a strong smell of blood flooding the chapel, which was perceived by all those who went there to pray. The consequence of all this was that the monks were obliged to change Saint Charbel's clothes twice a week to avoid stains. As this miracle continued, the news spread even outside the convent, awakening a deep interest in all souls. As soon as the miracle was known, everyone agreed to affirm the obvious holiness of Saint Charbel.

Many people asked God for a miracle through his beloved servant; and God answered them all. Thus, the reputation of holiness of this humble monk and his miracles quickly spread in Lebanon and other countries. On July 14, 1927, Father Charbel's body, after having been clothed with priestly vestments, was buried for the second time with an imposing solemnity in the presence of a large crowd of the faithful. A brief account of the life, death, first and second burial of the Servant of God Charbel Makhluf was then read in Arabic, with an allusion to the possible instruction of his cause of beatification. This writing was signed by one of the judges, the Defender of the Faith, and the assistant notary, it was also sealed with the seal of the Commission, and finally signed by a large number of people present at the funeral. In addition, a report was read in French, on the state of Father Charbel's body to date, prepared by Dr. Armand Joufroy, professor at the French Medical Institute of Beirut, and Dr. Balthasar Mtlconien, medical assistant at the same Institute. They examined Father Charbel's body from the point of view of the Defender of the Faith, the only witness who attended the examination. The Ecclesiastical Commission took note of this medical report and signed it for further examination. These two precious documents were then placed in a hermetically sealed zinc tube next to Father Charbel's body, which was placed in a new wooden coffin, covered with zinc and sealed with the seal of the commission on a white arch.

The coffin was placed in a new tomb, specially prepared on the wall of the crypt, where it had been recently, and placed on two raised stones to avoid contact with the ground and to protect it from humility. The entrance to this tomb was solidly closed with well-hewn stones, and on the side wall was placed an epitaph, in which were recorded some important data about the life of the Servant of God, from his birth to the date of the second transfer of his body in July 1927.

REQUEST FOR BEATIFICATION

As all Lebanese know the extraordinary facts that happened to Saint Charbel, Abbot Ignatius Dagher El-Tannuri, as Superior General of the Lebanese Order, sent a petition to the Holy Pope Pius XI, of happy memory, begging him to grant the honors of Blessed to: Father Charbel Makhluf, Father Neemtallah El-Hardini and Sister Rafka. Pius XII deigned to study the request for the glorification of these servants of God, however, he ordered the Superior General to take the petition to His Beatitude, the Patriarch of the Maronite Church, to whom belongs the right to institute investigations and follow the established norms by the Sacred Canons to proceed with the preliminary investigation.

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PRESENTATION IN ROME OF THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS

The assembly charged with investigating the holiness of Father Charbel and his two companions, Father Neemtallah El-Hardini and Sister Rafka Al-Rayes, as well as the miracles attributed to them, and the prohibition on their being venerated in public before leaving Rome, held its first official session on June 20, 1928, at the convent of Our Lady of Relief in Jbail (Biblos), General House of the Maronite Order, in the presence of the Patriarch of the Maronite Church and the Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon. The results of the survey were presented by Patriarch Elias Hwayek to the Holy Father Pius XI, of holy memory. This new event was brought to the attention of the new Superior General, the respective Patriarch. The Superior General, Father John Andari, began a detailed study of the events, the results of which were immediately forwarded to the appreciation of His Beatitude Antonio Arida, Maronite Patriarch, and further research was requested. His Beatitude, the Patriarch, ordered his delegate, Father Mansour Awad, who had previously been the Defender of the Faith, to reopen the tomb during the investigation into Father Awad's holiness and miracles. With this order from the Maronite Patriarch, and in the presence of Father José Diryan, who acted as secretary, they tried to carry out the canonical investigation that the new event required.

The investigation was carried out by three doctors appointed by a special decree.

The doctors were: Dr. Chekre Bellen, Director of Health and General Assistant to the Lebanese Government; Dr. José Al-Hitti, Deputy of Mount Lebanon in the Lebanese Parliament; and Dr. Teófilo Maroun, Professor at the French Faculty of Medicine in Beirut.

This decree, dated March 18, 1950, was registered by the Apostolic Commission on the same date in the registration book of the Maronite Order (Vol.I nr.739). On April 22nd 1950, the commission, together with the doctors assigned to the office, set to work, as established by canon law, and the tomb was reopened.

They took the coffin and placed it in the center of St. Maroun's Church in Annaya. Soon the doctors began their work by making a thorough examination of the body in the presence of St. Josemaría. Bishop Paul Akel, Vicar General of the Maronite Patriarch for the District of Jbail, and Rev. Father John Andari, along with a large number of old monks who had met the Servant of God at the Hermitage and who had seen his body at the time of his burial on July 24, 1927.

They all identified the corpse, as well as the coffin in which it had recently been placed.

THE DISCOVERIES ON THE BODY OF FATHER CHARBEL

The witnesses present, both at the opening of the tomb and at the coffin where Father Charbel's body was found, stated that the body was kept intact and as they found it when they discovered it for the second time to be buried in this new coffin. They proved the following: the blood sweat that had begun just after the burial in 1889, and which had continued until 1927, still continued until that time; the blood had accumulated on the body and on the priestly vestments. Part of the chasuble had rotted, and the mold had spread in the tube that kept the authenticating documents of Father Charbel's body. The floor of the coffin had also been destroyed, and on the zinc sheet covering the bottom of the coffin they noticed a crack through which the blood of our saint was flowing. The blood, dripping on the coffin supports, accumulated on the wall of the tomb and then flowed into the chapel. Witnesses and other members of the commission were also able to prove that the documents were in perfect condition, while the priestly vestments were stained with blood, especially the dawn, which, because it was white, helped to better understand this miracle.

CHARBEL, INEBRIATED OF GOD

The light of truth that shone in the East spread its rays throughout the world, and a new star shone in the desert as the first example of a new way of life more pleasing to God.

And in adoration of the True Light, the songs of the monks rose up in the East and resounded throughout Lebanon, echoing the "Valley of the Saints," where a shepherd who lived near the Cedars of God heard the voice that rose from the Light, and dazzled by it, obediently followed it to Annaya. He lived in seclusion for fifty years, following the precepts of his predecessor, Paul the Hermit, to live only in daily communication with God, leading a life of sacrifice and austerity, overcoming the miseries and weaknesses of the flesh to consecrate himself totally to the Lord, in the hope of one day possessing eternal Light. This holy hermit, Charbel Makhluf, was at the top, almost touching the sky, and spent the nights in communication with God; in the radiant mornings, he repeated the words of Saint Anthony the Great, in reference to the Sun : "Why have you come to molest me, O bright star, and distract me from meditating on the True Light?"

And over the years, Charbel has become Annaya's shining star. This star shines in the firmament of the Catholic Church, which for centuries has been the incarnation of spiritual values and the perpetual guide personified in its saints. In the heart of this Light spread by the spirit of Catholicism, the Maronite Church has grown and blossomed like "a rose among thorns", nourished by the spirit of the monk Saint Maron, clinging to his motto:

"Where Peter exists, Christ exists".

Within this framework of the Catholic Church, they remain as in a vine, their fruits, the Saints, symbols of their immortal faith in Peter, for as Christ said:

"He who abides in me and I in him will bear much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Father Charbel Makhluf, a Lebanese Maronite monk, is the fruit of the divine vine, he was nourished by the love of Christ, and lived heroically by following his principles. His death was a faithful flow of his life. One drop of blood from his body that defied corruption is enough to heal body and soul. In him the truth of Christ's words was revealed: "He who believes in me, from his belly shall flow the waters of life."

Look to the East, the land of inspiration and prophets, O people of the West!

For Westerners, an "apostolic" life is an active life, a readiness to meet others, led by charity towards the spiritual needs of one's neighbor, and attentive in the multiplication of projects and initiatives for the conquest of the land of virtue and grace. For the Eastern tradition, on the contrary, the "apostolic" life is a vocation, and the ascetic life, which with prayer and penance, with the heroic practice of virtues, reaches a perfect degree of contemplation, an intimate and solid union with Christ, in order to realize the promises made by Jesus to the Apostles.

It is not the asceticism that leads men, it is the world that goes to the ascetic's meeting, to build, to improve, to receive advice and benefits, spiritual and material of any kind, thanks to the divine gifts of which it is plain who truly consecrates himself to God.

The hermit, that is to say, the flight, imposes to the monk and to the emissary to detach themselves completely from the world, and the world is also the men, for its passions, its sins and imperfections with which they put themselves at risk, at every step, to embarrass the ascetic in his way towards the perfect peace and the quiet contemplation. Absolute peace, which uproots the ascetic from the restless, noisy and sinful world, engages him in the spiritual world, so that he speaks only with angels, but from that language that the Babelic world needs if it wants to meet God, listen to Him, speak to Him and save itself.

PRODIGIES GOING TO HIS TUMB

Since the opening of the tomb in 1950 and while the tomb and body of Father Charbel were being examined, the monastery and the Church were filling up with the faithful from all over, many were still unaware of what had happened. Many of the visitors were affected by all kinds of illnesses. There were blind, deaf-mute, paralyzed and lame people. Even before the commission finished its work, there were extraordinary events. Many of these patients regained their health while the crowd never tired of shouting: **Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!**

The body and the coffin were placed in the tomb until the investigation was ready, and the tomb was securely closed with stones and tingling to prevent the faithful in their enthusiasm from taking away both the coffin and the body. Since that day, crowds from all over Lebanon have continued to come to Annaya Convent to visit the tomb of the Servant of God, Father Charbel, to obtain some benefit or blessing by simply touching his hands on the walls of the tomb. They took their sick, especially those who were judged lost by the doctors, and asked God through the intercession of His glorious servant to help them in their misfortune and need. Nothing could stop them in this pilgrimage enlightened by faith, neither the rain, nor the cold, nor even the muddy roads, nor the arid desert, nor the difficulty of finding the most insignificant comfort, of finding that sleeping on dry land or in the sky was like living in the most luxurious palace.

The monastery, its chapels, corridors and halls, as well as the courtyards, were all crowded with pilgrims of all rites and beliefs. They arrived day and night like tidal waves and also day and night following the liturgical rites. Some priests blessed the people with the image of Saint Maron, founder of the Maronite church or with the image of the Virgin Mary. Other times, the blessing was given with the Blessed Sacrament carried in procession among the ranks of the sick who were in the center of

the church, in the corridors of the convent, and in greater numbers near the tomb of Father Charbel. If a priest did not give the blessing to a Muslim or a Druze, he would shout: Father ... priest .... Bless me also with the Blessed Sacrament because I believe in God, in Jesus and in "Saint Charbel", who comes from afar to obtain this blessing, and with it the grace to heal my sickness. The crowd in the monastery, with great fervor and faith, asked God's forgiveness for their sins and did acts of penance. The return of sinners to God with a good confession, and the number of people who wished to receive Holy Communion, was increasing day by day.

A NEW AND UNIQUE EVENT

He hardly spent a day at the monastery without hearing the cries of joy from the pilgrims, while tears of joy and happiness flooded his eyes. The roar of applause, the ringing of bells, the exclamations of miracles...miracles.

Oh! the greatness of God!

Here it is a blind man who can now see partially or totally, there it is a paralytic who has regained all his strength, beyond it is a lame man who leaves the crutches; finally, sick people of all classes who unite in general joy, despite their own afflictions forget their pain to give thanks for all those who have been their brothers before God, praying even more with faith before the tomb of Father Charbel.

They all ask for relics of the new saint, and when they cannot get them, they pick up earth from the tomb and return home as happy and satisfied as if they had found the greatest treasure in the world.

The gigantic old oak tree that stood near the hermitage, under which hermit Charbel addressed his prayers to God and spoke to him, was also carried by the pilgrims. First the leaves and branches disappeared, then the trunk until they finally took root.

They boiled the leaves and prepared a kind of infusion which they then took. This drink had a surprising effect, the oak tree was called "the tree of life", but in less than two months it didn't even remain a sign of it. All of them had a living faith in Saint Charbel, and many claimed to have seen him in their dreams, encouraging and prompting them to trust in the power of God, and to do penance for their sins.

THE FAME OF A MIRACULOUS SAINT IN THE WORLD

The world has become pensive. Glory came to Rome. Eternal Rome, which cautiously welcomes a fact of this nature in the safeguard of faith, was also moved.

Are we really in the presence of real miracles?

Everything seems to indicate that we are. There have been meetings, visits, expeditions, rigorous investigations, very severe examinations of witnesses and people who claimed to be favored by the Servant of God.

The incorruptible body of the humble servant of God was exposed to the eyes of the envoys from Rome, and various commissions of doctors of all religions had access to him.

On August 10, 1952, in a truly dazzling ceremony, Father Charbel's body was placed in a new crypt. And again and again caravans of carriages, travelers, pilgrims full of faith, the curious and skeptics, who, as if carrying on their backs the sad Semitic heritage, lacked biblical signs to believe. The world needs miracles so that men can return to the true path. God does not abandon even the lost sheep, and through miracles He wants people to remember Him, their loving fatherhood. The world needs miracles because the proud humanity believes that man, with his creative power, thinks he can do whatever he wants, forgetting that this power has received it from God. The fact was extraordinary, but it does not stop there all its transcendence. Around him, by his presence, by his relics, by the fervent invocations addressed to him by the faithful, there followed a series of marvelous events, incredible remedies, for which science could not find a reasonable solution.

A miracle! A miracle! This is what we hear everywhere.

ON THE WAY TO BEATIFICATION

THE TWO MIRACLES RECOGNIZED BY

HIS HOLINESS PAULO VI

Two miracles had been recognized by Pope Paul VI, I will talk about two miracles cited in the Process of Beatification of Saint Charbel. The first is that of Sister Mary Abel Kamary and the second is that of Mr. Iskandar Obeid.

SISTER MARY ABEL, OF SACRED HEARTS

I, Sister Mary Abel, entered the convent at the age of 16 on September 8, 1929 in Bikfaya. I enjoyed good health until 1936, when I began to feel stomach pains, causing all kinds of real eating discomfort. I was treated by a doctor, but I found no relief, continuing to suffer and vomit for seven months. In Hammana, I was examined by an Egyptian doctor, Dr. Marajil, who diagnosed a stomach ulcer and advised me to have an X-ray which confirmed what the doctor had said. As the treatment under this doctor's orders did not produce positive results, I consulted the famous surgeon Elias Baaclini who, after examining me, advised me to have several stomach washes. I then underwent an operation that lasted 2 and a half hours, during which I found a stomach ulcer, which also proved that the liver and gallbladder were not functioning normally.

As a result of all this, the wound remained open for drainage, but when I closed it, the vomiting came back with more intensity.

The doctors and surgeons conducted a new examination and unanimously decided to reoperate, an operation that lasted more than four hours. The result of this new operation was worse for me because the adhesions increased and the intestines became united. The doctors were forced to remove part of it to avoid almost certain death. For 14 years I continued to suffer horribly. For the first four years I could still walk inside the convent, and my food was scarce because I continued to vomit right after each meal, which made me very weak and weak. In 1940 I had to lie down for good, and in 1942 the pain increased, causing paralysis of my right arm. My suffering was terrible, I was on the verge of death, having already received the last sacraments.

When I heard about the miracles performed by Father Charbel, I asked him to pray for me in this way: If you wish to restore me to health, let me see you in my dreams and that very night, he appeared to me in a dream by my bed with open arms. What is interesting is that I saw him as he appeared in the miraculous picture before I knew it. I also dreamed that I was in a small chapel praying, kneeling in front of an altar, when suddenly the candles shone brighter, and I saw Father Charbel kneeling, raising his hands as if he was blessed.

On the morning of Tuesday, June 11, 1950, at 9:40 a.m., I left Bekfaya and went to the convent of St. Marun in Annaya, accompanied by Sister Izabel Gurayeb, the superior of the convent of Jbeil, Sister Bernadette Nafah, master of the convent of Bekfaya, and Sisters Maria Matilde Zambaca and Leotina Rahmeh.

On a chair, I was taken to the car, and during the whole trip they came back vomiting, arriving at my destination without wanting anything. As soon as we arrived in Annaya, they took me on a chair to the tomb of the Servant of God, managing to react a little so that I could touch and kiss the stone that guarded the mortal remains of Father Charbel. Shortly after praying in the company of other sick, blind, deaf, paralyzed, etc... I was taken to a room for a light rest. In the afternoon, I asked Sister Elizabeth for permission to spend the night near the tomb. She refused, however, alleging that she could not sleep because of the large crowd of sick people there. The next morning, they took me to the tomb, where I heard three masses, prayed and received Holy Communion. As I repeated the prayers that all the sick people made with great faith, I looked at the tomb where Father Charbel's name was engraved, and I saw him covered with shining drops of sweat. I immediately removed a small handkerchief saying: "These drops are mine, and they are a gift from Father Charbel, I will get up, dry them with my handkerchief, and then with this handkerchief I will treat my whole body".

That's what I did, and I immediately stood up, in front of my sisters and the crowd around me.

The bells began to ring joyfully to praise the good Lord, for I was completely healed. Without wasting any time, I went to the church where I attended Holy Mass and took communion. Among those present were five Jesuit priests who saw this miracle. One of them, Father Agia, climbed the steps of the altar and, giving thanks to God for this miracle, encouraged the people to continue firmly in their faith. After mass, I met Dr. Farah, who asked me to report back to him, telling us what had been given.

This testimony bears the following signature:

Sister Mary Abel - from the Two Sacred Hearts Convent. July 19, 1950

THE SECOND MIRACLE RECOGNIZED BY POPE PAUL VI

The second miracle is that of Mr. Iskandar Obeid. He had been hit by a branch of a tree in his right eye in 1937, which caused a rupture of the retina and he lost his sight. Mr. Obeid visited many doctors, and the best specialists advised him to pluck out his eye as all medical efforts were deemed futile. He remained in this state until the miracles of Saint Charbel appeared in 1950. He devoted himself to prayer and many prayers at the tomb of Saint Charbel in Annaya.

He later saw St. Charbel, in a dream, asking him to come to the Convent.

Mr. Obeid spent the whole day praying in the monastery of St. Marun and lying by the tomb. After this, he felt a pain in his eye. When he returned to Baabdat, the pain continued but much more unbearable.

He slept and saw in his dream that he was at the entrance of the Holy Moses Convent (Mar Moussa) unloading a car. Suddenly, the driver put an iron bar in his eye. At this moment he woke up in fear. He had the same dream once again, but this time he saw a monk throwing a powder-like substance.

He said to him, "you will suffer and be healed in the end. "and the monk then disappeared. Mr. Iskandar Obeid looked at the ground and saw engraved on it the following words: Father Charbel, servant of God. He was startled, and covered his eye with a towel and he clearly saw on it the image of Saint Charbel. He started screaming, calling out to his wife. The neighbors crowded around and shouted with voices of joy and singing and praying. According to science and conscience, we must say that an eye so badly and for a long time was certainly lost forever. Therefore, we cannot explain how he was healed, certainly not by natural means of medicine, and attribute it to an Almighty, who operates only by divine grace. There is no other explanation, and it is certain that we have searched earnestly for an explanation, without finding one.

BEATIFICATION OF CHARBEL

The more we isolate ourselves to be close to God, the closer we are to people. Withdrawing from the world so as not to be of the world, even though he has lived in the world (Jn 17:16). Saint Charbel is known all over the world. The hundreds of thousands of letters that arrive at the monastery of Annaya bear witness to this. Thus, the life of Saint Charbel is the proof that the true hermit in the Church is an apostle of Christ, an apostle par excellence. Father Charbel was beatified on December 5, 1965 by His Holiness Pope Paul VI in the presence of his compatriots, all the cardinals and bishops of the Universal Church who were in Rome on the occasion of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. On October 9, 1977, the same Pope canonized him, declaring the Saint of Lebanon, a Saint for the universal Church, during the Synod of Bishops. These unforgettable events, since he was the first oriental confessor, were a great honor for Lebanon and especially for the Maronite Church and the Lebanese Maronite Order. Blessed Sister Rafqa (Rebeca) El-Choboq El-Rayés de Himlaya, born in 1832, died in 1914, (she was beatified by Pope John Paul II on November 17, 1985); and the new Blessed Father Nemtallah Kassab Al-Hardini, born in 1808 and died in 1858, (he was beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 10, 1998, the first anniversary of the visit of the Holy Father John Paul II to Lebanon). Like Saint Charbel, they were members of the Lebanese Maronite Order, male and female branches.

Yes, Lebanon can be proud of **CHARBEL, RAFQA and NEMATULLAH EL-HARDINI.**

How many times have the leaders of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican said, « You have the most beautiful figures of holiness in the Church. What an honor for our Maronite Church which bears witness to the Gospel of Christ in the Middle East, and which is the only Eastern Church that has always remained Catholic ».

This is a curious phenomenon and sometimes the question arises: why do we meet so many people who regularly and almost every day visit the tomb of Saint Charbel?

The answer seems to me to be the following: in today's world, so materialistic, so selfish and so sensual, people, afflicted by inner emptiness, have a nostalgia for happiness that cannot be found in comfort, nor in wealth, nor in the lust of the flesh, nor in the pride of life, as St. John the Evangelist says (1 Jn 2:16), but it can be found in the virtues that our Saint tried to live with great heroism. That's why they come here to feel a little happy, close to this man whom I have managed to get to know and experience the authentic happiness they are looking for, and to try to imitate him. Mission in today's world: What can we also say about "the admirable flower of holiness that blossomed on the stump of ancient Eastern monastic traditions" as Pope Paul VI said at the beatification ceremony of St. Charbel; and he added: "May Father Charbel make us understand in a world too fascinated by

wealth and comfort, the irreplaceable value of poverty, penance and asceticism to free the soul in its ascent to God.

In fact, our world today is disoriented and torn; it has a lot of science but little spirit, a lot of interests but little love, a lot of selfishness but little self-denial and self-giving to God and to others. It is understood that love can give harmony, humility and the satisfaction of life back to today's world. The life of Saint Charbel is, for each one of us, a model of the right direction.

By: Joseph Mahfouz

Former Bishop of the Maronite Church in Brazil

CHARBEL SUBJECT OF COMMENTS

IN LEBANON AND WORLDWIDE

Not a month had passed since Father Charbel was in Lebanon, the main topic of conversation, both in public places and at home, the figurehead of all Lebanese diaries, as well as in magazines and other publications. It would be difficult to find a village or a city in Lebanon where a miracle of our saint has not been performed. Everybody was talking about it. Everywhere there were rumors of new wonders, and everyone wanted to meet those who were favored by the servant of God.

When miracles occurred in cases that science could not solve, the news of these miracles quickly spread through Lebanon, and was even commented on in Syria, Egypt, and many times in Europe, and even in America. A month after the opening of Father Charbel's tomb, a huge crowd came from Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and other countries. What was happening at Father Charbel's tomb was extraordinary. He was a saint, and God favored him with the power and grace of miracles. Father Charbel, and his miracles, became the subject of conversation at every wheel, at home, in families, between big and small, finally it was something that reached the sublime. For Lebanon, these miracles had the virtue of awakening its faith and bringing about a long-awaited moral transformation. Many people abandon religious practices, or are half indifferent, come back to fulfill all their duties of piety, and conversions are numerous and extraordinary.

More than 5,000 pilgrims visited Father Charbel's tomb daily.

On Sundays, this number increased to 10,000 and 15,000. On the day of Pentecost and the following Monday, the number was 40,000, and many were able to contemplate a wonder never before seen by human eyes. They said that they saw a great brightness on the sides of Father Charbel's tomb, and that it emitted a wonderful heavenly radiation. At first it was completely white, then it became like tongues of fire, and completely red like the tongues of fire that fell on the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

This same light appeared later in the monastery chapel, also in the hermitage was seen several times by a large number of people.

THE FAME OF SAINT CHARBEL IN RUSSIA

Who is Charbel?

"I would like to know if there really exists a monk who performs miracles, who heals the sick in Russia and in the world? "- from the Russian newspaper "The Curator". Yes, it's true, it's a Lebanese Christian monk, Saint Charbel, who was recognized in Russia by us, the collaborators of the newspaper. Because he is famous, this servant of God?

It is thanks to his life as a hermit and his total abdication that he continues to perform miracles in Russia. All miracles are exceptional events. Nowadays, answers the head of the Russian newspaper "The Healer", every miracle that relates to a fact of healing, it is carefully studied, not only by the doctrines of the Church, but also by doctors and sages. In the event that the healing facts are officially confirmed, the Saint is glorified with very special honors: the Church elevates him to the list of Saints. The Russian newspaper does not stop mentioning the facts saying that in the Annaya Monastery where the living body of

Saint Charbel is housed (it was more than 100 years ago), he was visited by more than one million men and women from 95 countries. Many of them were healed right after visiting the monastery.

HOW RUSSIA MEET SAINT CHARBEL?

Almost 5 years ago his image was given to us by the country of Belarus. A short article published in a Belarusian newspaper informed us that the image of Saint Charbel healed the sick. We, the editors of the newspaper "The Curator" and the magazine "Home Emergency Medicine" published the image of Saint Charbel with the title: "Try it: it can relieve you!

We did not advertise it and we made it our duty not to create hope, because we do not believe in miracles. Meanwhile, after a while, many letters came in from all over the country, in which many miracles of healing were cited. This is how we began to study the phenomenon. We contacted the Lebanese monasteries and received a lot of curious information about what we called the phenomenon of "Saint Charbel". After all, we went to this mountainous country called Lebanon, where Saint Charbel continues to miraculously heal the sick and needy. From 1977 to 2001, we published his picture four times in our newspaper and edited two brochures entitled "The Charbel Phenomenon".

Then the Bayoukanski writer Anatoli Borisovitch (J. Soros Academic Prize, Emeritus Master of Culture) wrote a book with the same title as above, "The Phenomenon of Saint Charbel". Thousands of people bought his book, but many letters reached the writer not to stop writing about Saint Charbel. Another book entitled "Saint Charbel in Russia" was written. In 1999 we published the photo of the Saint in the magazine: Emergency Medicine at Home.

The author as well as the editorial staff of the magazine received thousands of letters from thank you. Father Valery, deacon of the Russian Orthodox Church in the town of Naberejnye Tchelny, wrote : In fact, you have "discovered" Saint Charbel. You don't think it's a simple coincidence.

The visit of the holy places as well as the book you wrote are a divine Providence. Not all painters have the gift of painting icons, not all writers have the talent to write books on the lives of the saints.

We cannot name all the miracles, so the cases of healing that you will immediately experience will surprise you and force you to think seriously about God, Love and Faith.

MIRACLES IN RUSSIA

We always talk and believe that nothing is impossible with God and His saints. We are always surprised to hear the recitals of the miracles performed by Saint Charbel.

MIRACLE IN VORONEZH

When you receive a fantastic letter, you ask yourself for a moment: should it be published? Because it was extraordinary. Then we rightly judge the following:

If an adult person, a doctor in particular, wants to share his joy with us, what right do we have not to believe him?

Here is the content of the letter that is kept in the archives of the newspaper "The Curator": "For a long time, I believed only in so-called official medicine, in surgery much more. Forgive me, but I did not have faith in healing by saints, especially the photos and pictures.

Even though I had faith and I visited the Church sometimes.

We found, by chance, a fibrous tumor in my left breast (she is a doctor reporting). I left the polyclinic and went to an ontological hospital. You understand well the condition of a person suffering from this disease. By chance, and it is very good that it is not really by chance, because nothing in our lives is accidental, I found, one day, the photo of Saint Charbel, printed in a book written by Mr. Bayoukanski.

I read his book and I figured I had nothing to lose and it would be good to try.

I started to display the image of Saint Charbel in a favorite place and I prayed with great faith. For a month, I put the portrait of Saint Charbel next to my bed and I begged God to help me and at the same time I asked him the same thing. It is up to you to believe it or not, but a real miracle happened. I had doubts myself, until I did more tests and ultrasound analysis, I listened to the doctors, very emotional, whispering among them.

- Forgive me, said the head doctor, - but we don't understand what happened.

The tumor has disappeared. I did not explain anything, so on the way back I thanked Saint Charbel with all my heart.

I know very well that not everyone will believe it, but this miracle really happened and I confirm it.

It may be that psychotherapy is the cause, but I am sure that Saint Charbel is the main cause and my faith in his strength, this Lebanese saint in whom I never stopped believing.

MIRACULOUS PHOTOGRAPHY OF SAINT CHARBEL

Divine Providence was worthy to provide the Lebanese Maronite Order with an authentic image of its faithful servant of God, Saint Charbel, a photograph in which he is represented as he was in his last days on earth.

This photograph reached the hands of the Lebanese Maronite Order in the most miraculous way, and we will bring it back, because it goes beyond the limits of human understanding.

The facts are reported here as they occurred on May 8, 1950, leaving it to the Holy Faith to judge and make the final decision, since it is up to Peter alone to judge the authenticity or not of the miracles. At that time, the Congregation of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries was celebrating the feast of their holy and glorious patron saint, Saint John the Evangelist. The superior granted several priests the necessary authorization to visit the tomb of Saint Charbel in the convent of Saint Maron. Forty brothers from Jounieh arrived at the convent around noon. After visiting the hermit's tomb, they spent three hours in the chapel praying and meditating, and finally attended the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament. Some of them then went to visit the hermitage called the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. They were as follows: Father Pedro Chalhoub, brothers Elias Nohra and Luiz Yazbek de Kartaba, novice José Antonio de Abrim, and postulant Juan Ghussan de Bashtar. Father Chalhoub and Brother Nohra carried a camera.

After visiting the chapel and the room of Saint Charbel, Brother Nohra took some pictures in memory of the chapel. Before his return, he wanted to take a picture of the group of priests and brothers who went to visit the hermitage where his holy companion lived. The group was placed as follows: from left to right of the observer: novice José Antonio, postulant Juan Ghussan, a young visitor, and Brother Luiz Yazbek, all standing. Elias Ramia, guardian of the hermitage, while Brother Nohra and Father Chalhoub were next to the camera. No one else was with them at that time. The next day, Brother Elias Nohra, tried to develop the film, and saw with great surprise the image of an old and venerable brother, with a long beard and on his knees, among the group of people he had seen. that he had photographed, and where he was standing to take the picture. Moreover, the image of this brother was so transparent that everything behind him was visible without altering his image, which was clear and bright. The famous photo reached the ears of the Superior General of the Lebanese Order, who was quick to ask for the photo, thus obtaining the original negative. It was quickly sent to qualified photographers for a rigorous examination. After the examination, a new copy was presented to new people, who had personally met Saint Charbel. They were: first the son of the niece; according to the companions of the Order who lived with him, one of them, even without belonging to the Order, lived nearby and frequently visited Saint Charbel, while the others were all brothers of Saint Charbel because they

belonged to the same religious order. This photograph clearly teaches us two interesting things, known to those present on April 22, 1950, about the investigations that took place at the convent of Annaya. They are the following: first, that the fingers of their right hand are as perfect and intact as can be seen on the coffin, as if they had been photographed directly on the coffin. The second extraordinary event in this photograph is that the curve of the left eyebrow is more strongly marked than that of the right eyebrow, and it is common knowledge that when Saint Charbel was attacked by paralysis, a disease that killed his left eyebrow, it changed its shape as indicated above. All those who were fortunate enough to witness his holy death were witnesses to it.

This photography clearly teaches us two interesting things, known to those present on April 22, 1950, about the investigations that took place at the convent of Annaya.

They are the following: first, that the fingers of their right hand are as perfect and intact as can be seen on the coffin, as if they had been photographed directly on the coffin.

The second extraordinary event in this photograph is that the curve of the left eyebrow is more strongly marked than the curve of the right eyebrow, and it is common knowledge that when Saint Charbel was attacked by paralysis, a disease that killed his left eyebrow, it changed shape as indicated above.

This photo I keep it with a lot of love and devotion for Saint Charbel since I was a student at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik - USEK. It is the first photo after his beatification distributed by the Lebanese Maronite Order (LMO).

CANONIZATION OF SAINT CHARBEL

On December 5, 1977, during the World Synod of Bishops, Holy Pope Paul VI canonized Father Charbel, thus sanctifying him in the ranks of the saints. After the canonization, His Holiness honored Saint Charbel and said :

An hermit from the Lebanese mountains is included in the number of those sanctified. A new eminent member of the monastic sanctity enriches all the Christian people by his example and intercession. May he make us understand, in a world largely fascinated by wealth and comfort, the supreme value of poverty to liberate the soul in its ascent to God. The example and lifestyle of Saint Charbel, hermit and saint, inspire the people of God to seek a desert of silence, solitude and solidarity in this materialistic world.

"Solitude is suffering for the one who does not live with God."

Will my soul be dissipated with the remnants of dust? No, my God, merciful Father, I have never doubted your existence; and in giving myself this immortal mission, in mine and in death, I adore your sacraments in silence and your glory confesses your Divinity.

And here we are today, venerating together children of whom all Lebanon, and especially the Maronite Church, can be proud: Charbel Makhluf.

A very special son, a paradoxical artist of peace, for he sought to keep it away from the world, only in God, that he was drunk.

But his lamp, lit in the last century on the mountain top of his hermitage, shone with ever-increasing splendor, and the unanimity of his holiness was quickly established. We have already honored him by declaring him Blessed on December 5, 1965, at the close of the Second Vatican Council. Today, by canonizing him and extending his cult to the whole Church, we present to the whole world as an example this worthy monk, glory of the Lebanese Maronite Order (OLM) and worthy representative of the Western Churches and their noble monastic tradition. François-René de Chateaubriand, the glorious French writer and philosopher, in his exaltation: "The reality of God's existence," he wrote: He is God. The grasses of the valley and the cedars of Lebanon bless Him, the birds sing to Him in their shelters, the wind whispers to Him in their forests, the thunder reveals His power and the ocean declares His immensity.

SPEECH OF POPE PAUL VI

In honor of Saint Charbel

The whole Church, in the East as well as in the West, is today invited to a great joy. Our hearts turn to heaven, where we now know with certainty that Saint Charbel Makhluf is associated with the incomparable happiness of the saints, in the light of Christ, praising and interceding for us.

Our eyes also turn to the place where he lived, to the beloved country of Lebanon, whose representatives we are happy to greet: His Beatitude Patriarch Antonio Pedro Khoraiche, together with a good number of his brothers and Maronite sons, the representatives of other Catholic and Orthodox rites and, on the civil level, the delegation of the Lebanese government and parliament, whom we thank warmly. Your country, dear friends, had already been greeted with admiration by the biblical poets, impressed by the vigor of the cedars, made a comparison of the life of the righteous. It was to him that Jesus himself came to reward the faith of a Syro-Phoenician woman: the first fruits of salvation destined for all nations. And this Lebanon, a meeting place between East and West, has in fact become the homeland of various peoples, who have clung enthusiastically to their land and to their fruitful religious traditions. The storm of recent events has carved deep wrinkles on his face and cast a dense shadow on the paths of peace. But you know our constant sympathy and affection: together with you, we look forward to a renewed cooperation among all the children of Lebanon. What does such a life represent?

The assiduous practice, pushed to the extreme, of the vows of religion lived in silence and monastic stripping: first of all, the strictest poverty in terms of housing and clothing; only one meal a day, frugal. Heavy manual labor in the harsh mountain climate. Chastity that it surrounds with a legendary intransigence. Last but not least, total obedience to superiors and even to the

brothers, and to the regulations of the hermits, showing total submission to God. But the key to this life, strange in appearance, is the search for holiness, that is, the most perfect conformity with Christ, humble and poor, the almost interrupted conversation with the Lord, personal participation in Christ's sacrifice through a fervent celebration of Mass and rigorous penance united with intercession for sinners. In a word, the incessant search for God alone, which is proper to monastic life, accentuated by a hermetic solitude. This enumeration, which hagiographers can illustrate with many concrete facts, gives the appearance of a very austere holiness, doesn't it?

Let us stop at this paradox, which leaves the modern world perplexed, even irritated; a man like Charbel Makhluf is still admitted to an unparalleled heroism, before which we bow, considering above all his firmness above normal.

But isn't this "madness in the eyes of men", as the author of the book of Wisdom already said? Christians will not lack whom to ask: did Christ really demand such a renunciation, he whose welcoming life departed from the austerities of Saint John the Baptist? Worse still: some Corifians of modern humanism will not even suspect, in the name of psychology, that this uncompromising austerity was an abusive and traumatic disregard for the values of the body and love, for friendly relations, for creative freedom, in a word: for life.

In short, austerity places him on the path to perfect serenity, to true happiness; it leaves all the room, very much room, for the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the people of God have not been deceived in appreciating it. Always in Charbel Makhluf's life, holiness radiated from him; his fellow countrymen, Christian or not, venerated him, they came to him as a doctor of souls and bodies. And since his death, the light shines even more brightly on his tomb: how many people in search of spiritual progress, or detached from God, or subject to misfortune, continue to feel the fascination of this man of God, invoking him fervently, while others, called apostles, have left no trace, like those mentioned in Sacred Scripture. The lifestyle of these religious, monks, hermits, is not proposed to everyone as a charism that they can imitate, but in a pure, radical way, they incarnate a spirit from which no one is exempt, they exercise a function that the Church could not do without, they remind everyone of a healthy path. It is certain that in the one Mystical Body of Christ, as Saint Paul says, the charisms are many and diverse; they correspond to different functions, each one having its indispensable place. They are necessary Pastors, who gather the people of God and preside over them wisely in the name of Christ. We need theologians who study doctrine and we need a Magisterium to watch over it. We need evangelizers and missionaries who carry the word of God in all the ways of the world. We need catechists, teachers and pedagogues of the faith: this is the objective of this Synod. We need people who dedicate themselves directly to helping their brothers and sisters.

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Ultimately, this allows us to increase the special interest of today's hermetic vocation. It seems, moreover, to regain a certain favour, which cannot be explained solely by the decadence of society or by the constraints to which it is subjected. Such a vocation can, moreover, take forms adapted to the present time, provided that it is always lived with discernment and obedience. It is a witness which, far from being the survival of a past that is already dead, seems to us to be very important for our world as well as for our Church. Bless the Lord for having given us Saint Charbel Makhluf, in order to revive the strength of his Church, by showing his example and his prayer. May the new Saint continue to exert a prodigious influence, not only in Lebanon, but in the whole East and in the whole Church. May he intercede for us, poor sinners, who too often dare not risk the experience of the beatitudes, which are what ultimately leads us to perfect joy. May he intercede for his brethren of the Lebanese Maronite Order, and for the entire Maronite Church, whose merits and trials everyone knows. Intercede for the beloved country of Lebanon, help it to overcome its current difficulties, to heal its still bleeding wounds, and to walk in hope. Support and guide him in the good and just way, as we will sing it soon. Shine your light upon Annaya, uniting men in concord and drawing them to God, whom he is beholding in eternal bliss. Praise be to the Holy Trinity who gave us the joy of proclaiming the Lebanese monk Charbel Makhluf a saint!

THE SECRET OF SAINT CHARBEL'S HOLINESS

It is as a result of his in-depth study of the liturgy, and in a particular way of the Holy Mass, that Saint Charbel became a saint. He knew that in the mysteries of this liturgy we possess the person of the Lord, his redemptive word and the manifestation of his grace, according to the words that St. Ambrose addressed to Jesus Christ: "It is in your mysteries that I find you. Here we can explain why Saint Charbel's life was a constant active participation in the mystery of Christ, Savior and Redeemer. He was himself a Christ, an anointed one, a priest with the power and the right to offer to God the Father, through the intercession of his divine Son, a sublime sacrifice. This conviction of Saint Charbel was manifested in the way he lived his Mass. We can say without any doubt that all his life and all his activities were ordered and absorbed by the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Saint Charbel always celebrated his mass at 11 o'clock in the morning; the rest of the day, our Saint spent the rest of the day preparing and giving thanks. His favorite place was to stay in front of the tabernacle, in a deep contemplation of the Holy Mystery. After the meditation, Saint Charbel recited the Divine Office before the Blessed Sacrament. At midnight, he sang the matins. How many times and with what love he communicated with God at midnight, while he was repeating this beautiful passage from the Breviary: "Make us worthy, Lord God, to glorify Your Majesty tonight with the angels that never sleep and the heavenly hosts that praise You unceasingly."

Or this passage: "It was night, and David awoke to meditate and admit his guilt". He wept bitterly and begged: "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I have sinned in You. How many times and with what love he communicated with his God at midnight, repeating this beautiful passage from the Breviary : "Make us worthy, Lord God, to glorify Your Majesty tonight with the angels that never sleep and the heavenly hosts that praise You unceasingly." Or this other passage: "It was night, and David awoke to meditate and admit his guilt". He wept bitterly and begged, "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I have sinned against you."

THE SAINT WHO OPERATES

"I COME TO OPERATE YOU"

Saint Charbel thus appeared while addressing his followers. How to obtain this grace from God through his Saint?

To receive God's grace is the practice of love, love that is concretized by acts as the tree shows it by its fruits, a generous love that leads us to imitate Saint Charbel, to love him, to love God whom he loved and embraced for us, especially by resisting humiliations and sufferings, as his only Son, to resemble him, to be victims with him and like him and out of love for him. The other virtue that we must recognize and always imitate is Saint Charbel's perfect obedience to God whom he loved so much and whom he never abandoned, the greatest virtue which is obedience to God. Obedient love or obedience to love were the

wings of a pure dove that led him to the Heart of God. Saint Charbel did not abandon the world to find God, but to dwell in the Heart of God. The more we isolate ourselves to be close to God, the closer we are to men. He withdrew from the world so as not to be of the world, although he lived in the world (Jn.17:16). Saint Charbel is known all over the world. Thousands of letters arrive at the monastery of Annaya to testify this fact. Thus, the life of Saint Charbel is the proof that the true hermit in the Church is an apostle of Christ, an apostle par excellence.

THE MIRACLE THAT SHOOK THE 21st CENTURY

THE WOMAN WHO DID NOT KNOW SAINT CHARBEL!

Dafne Gutierrez, a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, was completely blind.

When she was 13 years old in 1999, she developed a skull disease and the pressure on her brain increased so much that it severely affected the optic nerve. This resulted in near blindness. Despite her disability, she married and had three children. However, in 2014, she lost almost all her vision and in 2015, she began to experience headaches, fainting spells, noise in her ears, vomiting and dizziness. Doctors said her blindness was "permanent and medically irreversible". Finally, in January 2016, Dafne had to be admitted to a nursing home because she could not take care of herself and her children, she turned to Saint Charbel.

It was then that in that same month of January, Dafne heard in a radio program in Spanish that a relic of Saint Charbel, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his beatification, was on a pilgrimage across the United States, and would be in the Maronite Catholic Church of Saint Joseph in his city at that time.

However, Dafne had never heard of such a saint, and he did not know this church. Providentially, on the same day, his sister-in-law, who had seen the above announcement, suggested that he go with her husband to venerate the relic, asking for its healing. On her way to the church, she prayed: "Please, my God, heal me, it is not for me, but for my children".

When she arrived at the Maronite church, she asked Saint Charbel: « I don't know who you are, but please help me ». After the mass, Dafne was able, with the faithful present, to touch the Saint's relic. Helped by her sister-in-law, Dafne then went to the confessional, and there, during confession, she revealed her blindness to the vicar, Father Dafne. The priest then gave her a blessing with the oil of Saint Charbel, praying especially for her healing. The priest then said: "I put my hand on her head and then on both her eyes, and I asked God to heal her through the intercession of Saint Charbel". What is curious is that Dafne said: "I felt that someone was standing on my right. He then asked his sister-in-law, who replied that there was no one at his side except the father. Even today, Dafne reaffirms that there was someone at his side. Was he the miraculous saint?

"From that moment on," says Dafne, "I started to feel different. I can't explain it, but I felt my body different".

The next day, Sunday, he went to St. Joseph's church again to venerate the relic of St. Charbel. The night of that day, at 4 o'clock in the morning, Dafne woke up with the sensation that his eyes were burning. She woke up her husband. He asked her how this was possible, since she no longer had sensitivity in her eyes. She put her hand on them, and realized that they were really hot.

"They vibrate and move," he exclaimed. At the same time, she smelled like burning flesh. Dafne then realized that she was starting to see her husband, although she was still like a shadow. Exulting, he exclaimed, "I see him! I can see him with my own two eyes". And he fell into tears. The children woke up and began to shout: "Mommy can see, God healed mommy!"

That is to say that in 48 hours, since his first visit to the venerable relic, Dafne had completely recovered his sight.

The world needs miracles because mankind is proud and man believes that with his strength he can do whatever he wants, forgetting that this strength has been received from God. Until this moment, many miracles in the world happen through the intercession of Saint Charbel, just follow the daily news. It is the Saint who performs the most miracles in this century.

PHOTO OF DAFNE GUTIERREZ

You can assist the testimony and others on Youtube:

Dafne Gutierrez Healed through Intercession St. Sharbel in Arizona

https://youtu.be/yBhj70vlANQ

MIRACLES WITH MUSLIMS

A Muslim woman suffered from breast cancer five years ago. Her neighbor told her about Saint Charbel, the miraculous saint, and asked to accompany her to her monastery in Lebanon. The Muslim woman did not hesitate and went to Lebanon with her 5 children and visited the Saint and left. At midnight, the power went out and suddenly a priest in black clothes came towards her and burned her upper arm. The photo appeared clearly in the interview she gave to several television stations, and told her: « You are cured of cancer ». The woman called the neighbors and took her to the hospital where her doctors were and told them everything. The doctors redid all the tests and said, « There is no cancer »!

More miracles: The young girl, named Rahaf, at the age of 5 suffered from an incurable brain disease. The doctor had informed her father, Mr. Mohamed Ali Al Helbawi, from the village of Nabi Shit, located in the Bekaa Valley, was afraid and feared for his daughter's life. With great faith, he put his daughter in the hands of Saint Charbel and promised to Saint Charbel to sacrifice a lamb (it is a custom since antiquity). Saint Charbel appeared during the night at Mr. Mohamed's house and told him: "Don't be afraid, you can let the doctor operate on your daughter and she will be cured one hundred percent. The next day, the doctor operated on the girl and he himself was astonished at the result of the operation which left no trace of the disease.

On the night of March 22, 2014, and in the church of Saint Charbel in the city of Zahle, capital of the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.

The father, after the mass, said the following: "Saint Charbel is the Saint of all and of the Church. He is from all of us... Believe... Believe"!

The life of Saint Charbel Makhluf revealed that the world needs miracles so that men can return to the true path. God does not abandon even the lost sheep. The world needs miracles because mankind is proud and man believes that with his strength he can do whatever he wants, forgetting that this strength was received from God. Until this moment, many miracles in the world are happening through the intercession of Saint Charbel, just follow the daily news. It is the Saint who performs the most miracles in this century.

THE MOVIE

I had the privilege to play the character of Abdo, (in the scene of the lamp) in the film about the life of Saint Charbel. I also feel honored to have participated as assistant director of the film in the preparation of the sets, props that involve the smallest details, because since I entered the University of the Holy Spirit of Kaslik, I participated in the preparation of a magazine on the life of Saint Charbel, edited by my competent master, Father Paul Daher, at the Convent of Saint Anthony in Beirut.

And, every day, I became a faithful follower of Saint Charbel.

From the book "Charbel, a man drunk with God" by Father Paul Daher, the scenario of the film on the life of Saint Charbel was elaborated and all the scenes were recorded in the places where he lived and made the pilgrimage of our Saint.

The film was made in 1966 and most of the actors were students and priests of the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik. Saint Charbel was perfectly executed by Father Superior Youssef Mouannes. The role I played in the film was the next important passage in Saint Charbel's life on the path to holiness, a fact known as the miracle of the lamp.

THE SCENE OF THE LAMPE

It was at the time when Charbel lived with his brothers, the monks, in the convent of San Marun. While the monks were having their meal with their prior, the prior said: "My brothers, as we suffer from a lack of oil, you have to sleep early, and you can't light the lamp after 8 p.m.".

Monk Charbel was not present at this meal.

Late in the afternoon, Charbel, not knowing the order of Father Superior, went to the kitchen and said to the helper: "Please, Abdo, fill this lamp for me. He took it from Charbel's hand and went to tell another brother, "Look, the monk Charbel is disobeying his superior.

The other brother replied: perhaps he does not know about the order of the Father Superior. Then Abdo exclaimed, "Look what I'm going to do, I'll fill the lamp with water ". They gave the lamp to Father Charbel. The two assistants chased him to his cell and began to spy on him through the keyhole. Then they saw Charbel turn on the lamp and it lit. Saint Charbel knelt down and began to pray. Abdo was perplexed when he saw that the lamp he himself had filled with water was lit.

At that moment, Father Superior passed by the hall and saw Abdo spying through the keyhole and told him: Abdo, what are you doing here?

Abdo answered: My master, Father Charbel, asked me to fill the lamp with oil and I filled it with water, but I am checking that it is lit. Father Superior sent Abdo out of the cell door and told him, "Don't play with Charbel anymore ". Father Superior knocked on the door, entered Charbel's cell, saw that the lamp was on and said to him: "Why your lamp is on, I did not warn you not to use oil, because we have little oil?

Charbel knelt down and said, " Forgive me for the love of God ". At that moment, to dispel a doubt, because Abdo had said that the lamp contained water and not oil, he opened the lamp, put his finger into it and after trying the liquid, he found that it was water.

The Prior knelt before Charbel and begged him: "Brother, forgive me, for love of God and bless me!

After this, Charbel entered the Hermitage.

Father Paul Daher wrote the book:

"Charbel, a man inebriate of God"

This Book is an international reference for all authors about the life of Saint Charbel.

This book served as the basis for the script of the movie. Father Paul Daher followed all the scenes of the movie without missing no one.

THE MOST FANTASTIC SCENE OF THE MOVIE

Obeying unconditionally, because Love for God is unconditional, it is Love without limits, Saint Charbel revealed this unconditional Love for God :

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

We were filming, and what touched my soul was the scene when Saint Charbel's mother came to visit him, and he refused to look at her face, he told her:

"MOTHER, WE WILL MEET IN PARADISE"...

For us, mortal human beings, it is difficult to refuse to take into account the request of our Mother!

But if we put ourselves in the plan of faith, it is not so difficult because Saint Charbel rewarded his Mother and gave her hope; by promising her heaven. For the first time in my life, with every tear shed by Saint Charbel, I understood that Jesus wept a thousand times. He loves man so much and with such intensity. And, Saint Charbel, obeying the teachings of the Holy Bible:

"He will leave the world, his family, and follow me"

Saint Charbel cried, yes, like a man who walked on the earth.

But it is certain that such a stature and such a distinction could reveal a stoic, insensitive and absolutely impassive personality.

A man who is holy would certainly be above the realities of the world with suffering and loss. Peacefully, he would be beyond human "instabilities" with anguish and sadness.

Saint Charbel was certainly not affected by the blows of life that dyed you and me. At least, this is how we should portray him: a stranger, insensitive in his supreme life.

Dario Escobar, professor of theology at the Congregation of the Sacred Heart in Colombia, expatriated to the Lebanese Maronite Order and became a hermit, influenced and imbued with the love of Christ and following the path of Saint Charbel Makhluf.

THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE

Aramaic is the designation given to the different dialects of a language with its own alphabet and a history of more than three thousand years, used by the peoples who inhabited the Middle East.

It was the administrative and religious language of several ancient empires, and was the original language of many parts of the biblical books of Daniel and Ezra, as well as the Talmud.

Aramaic was the language of Jesus and remains the mother tongue of some small communities in the Middle East, especially in the interior of Lebanon and Syria. Its longevity is due to the fact that it is written and spoken by Christian villagers who for millennia inhabited the cities of northern Lebanon and the north of Damascus, the capital of Syria, including the famous villages of Maalula and Yabrud, The latter "where Jesus Christ stayed for 3 days", in addition to those

other well-known Catholic villages in Mesopotamia through which Christ passed, such as Tur'Abdin in southern Turkey, have brought the Aramaic intact to this day.On the cross, Jesus exclaimed in a great voice, in Aramaic :

"Eloí, Eloí, Lamá Sabactâni "?

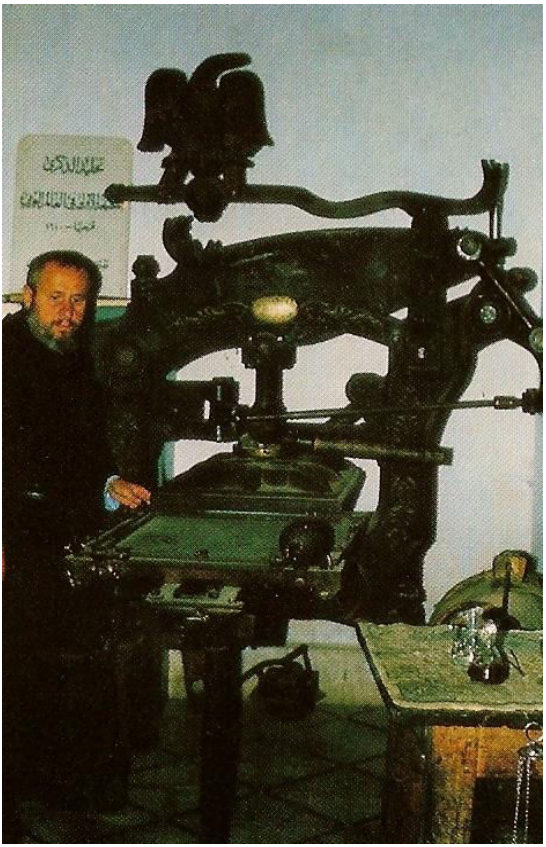
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"? (Matthew 27:46)

In Lebanon, the Syriac and Aramaic languages are still taught. At the beginning of the last century, due to political and religious persecution, thousands of these Christians fled to the west where, even today, thousands of them are still living.

A few hundred remain, living in the United States of America, Europe, and South America and curiously fluent in the language spoken by Jesus Christ. At the Holy Mass of the Syrian-Aramaic Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church of Antioch, the classical liturgical language is Syrian-Aramaic. The only Church that celebrates Holy Mass in the spoken language of Christ is the Maronite Church.

The Maronite liturgy preserves the oldest and most venerable traditions of the Catholic Church. In Maronite dioceses throughout the world, Mass is celebrated in the Syriac-Arabic language and the words of the consecration of the Bread of Our Lord are emphasized.

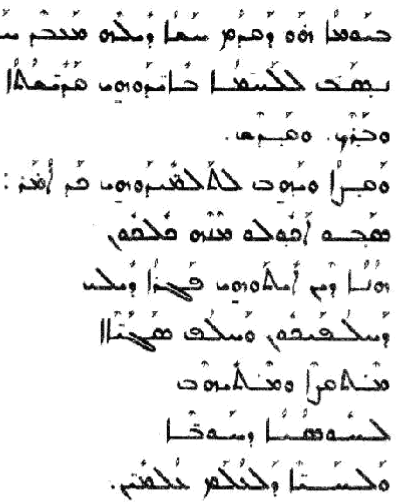
The Maronites of Mount Lebanon had been writing Arabic in Syriac script (Karchuni) since the Middle Ages. The printing press of the Santo Antônio convent in Kozahaya was the first in the East, founded in 1610, and published its first books in Syriac script.



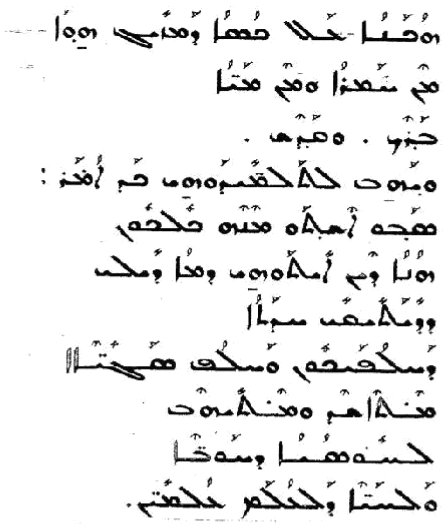
The first printing press in the Middle East

Eternal souvenir photo of the first printing press in the Middle East - Mount Lebanon - Kozahya - 1610

Saint Anthony Convent of Kozhaya



BIÁOMO HÁO DACDOMM HÁCHO DILÊH
Naquele dia que antecipou paixão sua
MÁABED HÁIE, NSÁB LAHMO BIDÁO
que nos deu a vida tomou o pão nas suas mãos
KADICHOTO, UBÁ + REKH UKÁDECH,
santas e abençoou e santificou
UAKSÔ UIÁB LTALMIDÁO KÁD OMÁR:
e partiu e deu aos seus discípulos e disse:
SÁB AKHUL MENÊH CULKHÚMM,
tomai, comei disto todos,
HÔNO DEN ITÁU FAGHRO DIL.
este é em nutrimento o corpo meu.
DAHLUFAICÚN UAHLÔF SAGUIHÊ
que para vós e por muitos
METEKSÊH UMETIHÊB LHUÇÔIO
é partido e dado para o perdão
DHÁUBE UALHÁIE DALOOLAMM OLMÍN.
dos pecados e a vida pelos séculos dos séculos.



HOOKHÁNO AÁL KÔÇO DAMZIGHO
Do mesmo modo sobre o cálice misturado
MÉN HÁMRO UMÉN MÁIÔ.
de vinho e de água.
BÁ + REKH UKÁDECH
Abençoou e santificou
UIÁB LTALMIDÁO KÁD OMÁR:
e deu aos discípulos seus e disse:
SÁB ICHTÁO MENÊH CULKHÚM:
tomai, bebei disto todos:
HÔNO DEN ITÁU DMÔ DIL,
este é em nutrimento o sangue meu
DIATÍKIH HDÁTÔ, DAHLUFAICUM
da aliança nova, para vós
UAHLÔF SAGUIHÊ METECHÊD UMETIHÊB
e por muitos versado e dado
LHULÇÔIO DHÁOBE UALHAIE
para o perdão dos pecados e a vida
DALOOLAMM OLME..
pelos séculos dos século..

Georges Mikhael Raad

MESSAGE OF SAINT CHARBEL IN THE WORLD

In a world terribly shaken by an artificial peace that is intertwined in its universal power struggles threatening to sink us back into the infernal abyss of war, there rises the radiant and sympathetic figure of a humble Maronite priest, Father Charbel Makhlouf.

In Annaya this new star has appeared, spreading his light in Lebanon, in the East and in the rest of the world; let us listen to his teachings, which cannot be other than those of Christ, and follow his example. For Lebanon, his beloved Homeland, he preaches faithfulness to the homeland, and faith as the surest way to survive. Faith being what holds the nation together losing this faith means its destruction. On the other hand, a country that loses some of its vitality through the immigration of its best elements has much to fear. Saint Charbel's message is addressed to the Lebanese, and in a special way to our dear immigrants, to remember true greatness:

To seek the truth with all our soul is to address God!

To the many who only know how to value the glitter of the vile metal, Father Charbel always repeats those words of the Holy Gospel: You cannot serve two masters, God and the world. To his brothers in the East, Saint Charbel makes these words of warning heard:

"Love one another"!

In the difficult hour in which we live, we could hear no other words that better translate Saint Charbel's thoughts:

"Union and always Union"

A small difference of opinion, even from a religious point of view, is not in itself an insuperable obstacle to unity, yet it would become a real danger to the East of Fr. Charbel's East, if by these differences all the Eastern peoples were in fratricidal struggles.

The Saint of Annaya also has a message for the contemporary world. We live in a time when man, who thinks he is civilized, is nothing more than a "robot" confined to his factories, offices or banking houses, desperately devoting himself to the daily struggle of human life. This gives rise to extreme selfishness, fratricidal jealousy, rivalry between peoples, and makes man a wolf towards his fellow man. Saint Charbel addresses to all the words of Saint Paul: "My brothers, have in yourselves the sentiments of Christ". We try to make the world never tired of seeking God, always look to Annaya, to the star that shows them "the way, the truth and the life".

That star is Jesus Christ, that way, that truth and that life is Christ. And the one who can lead us to Christ is Saint Charbel, whose holy life you have seen in these chapters. Saint Charbel is a model for us. Let us imitate that model and we will be glorified as the servant of God, Charbel Makhluf, was once glorified.

MEANING OF THE NAME CHARBEL AND

THE PRAYER KYRIÉ ELEÍSON:

CHARBEL is derived from Syriac, **Charb** means history and **E**l means God. The name **CHARBEL** then means the history of God. And many children were born and baptized under the name Charbel. Saint Charbel, devotee of Our Lady, Mother of God, he repeated it again and again, day and night:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, now and at the hour of our death" AMÉM!

Meaning of Kyrié Eleíson: The word Kyrié Eleíson of Latin origin comes from the junction of: Miserea / Misery and Color / Heart.

It therefore represents a feeling of sympathy. It is to house your neighbor's misery in your heart.

Mercy refers to the heart that sympathizes and acts. Invention of the ancient Greek which means: Lord, send your breath and send your mercy. Kyrié Eléison means "Lord, have mercy", it is a Christian prayer, and it is found in the Bible, in Psalm 51. Let us repeat it, and several times a day, as Saint Charbel did:

OH MY GOD, I NEED YOUR BREATH, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR MERCY!

BIOGRAPHICAL STAGES OF SAINT CHARBEL IN BRIEF:

1828 – 1898

08-05-1828 His birth in Bekaa Kafra

1851 -1852 First year of novitiate at Mayfouk

1852 -1853 His first devotion to Annaya

1853 -1859 His theological studies in Kfifan

23-07-1859 Your prescription to Bkerki

1859 -1875 His life in the convent of Annaya

15-02-1875 Your entrance to the Hermitage

24-12-1898 His death (Christmas Eve)

15-04-1899 The exchange of the grave

07-24-1927 The transfer to the third tomb

February 25, 1950 The opening of the tomb. Year of Miracles

05-12-1965 His beatification

09-10-1977 His proclamation as a saint

COMMEMORATIVE DATE: The International Day of Saint Charbel is celebrated every year on July 24th.

SUPREME DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

To my teachers, professors, parents of the University of the Holy Spirit of Kaslik, I never fail to recognize your virtues, your spiritual values, prophets living eternally for all that I call "me" since my childhood, your student.

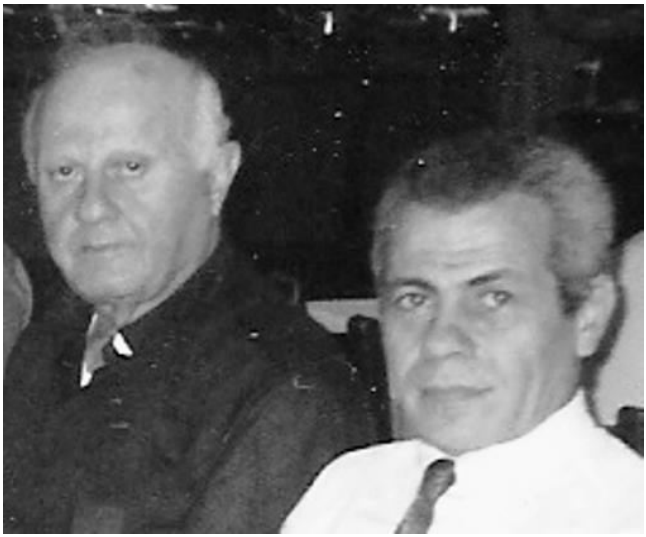
You have opened the windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. If you were not my masters, my teachers, my living prophets, I would sleep among those who disturb the serenity of this world. I see in you, my teachers and professors of the University of the Holy Spirit, as in the image of Jesus, unlimited wisdom and strength, the supreme disciples of Jesus, my guides, the ideal of all of us, your students in Lebanon and all over the world, our aspiration for greatness, wisdom and perfection.

And to dedicate this book to you and make it so alive and fascinating, I feel privileged to be blessed by your companion, Father Mtanios Shaina, as we lived with him when I was a student at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik. I feel honored and blessed by the holy hands of Father Mtanios Shaina at my mother's side; a blessing from God through his servant, like Saint Charbel. Following the example of Saint Charbel, Father Mtanios (Anthony) Shaina completed his mission on earth, isolated in the Convent. He will be raised to the heights of the altars.

I am honored to have met Father Mtanios Shaina personally, next to my mother, and to have been blessed by his holy hands, a blessing emanating from God through his servant.

In our childhood, and in the classrooms, we always take as our supreme example our teachers who, with their words emanating from prophetic souls, remain engraved in our unconscious and enlighten us to guide us on the path of wisdom.

The words of Abbot Boulos Naaman and many other supreme masters still resound in my ear like the perfume that emanates from the sacred cedars of eternal Lebanon.



With my teacher and spiritual guide, Father Boulos Naaman, Former Superior of the OLM during his visits to Brazil.

USEFUL LINKS

On these two websites, the reader will find, in several languages, information about the life of Saint Charbel: **www.marcharbel.com**

The reader can watch the black and white film on the life of Saint Charbel, subtitled in English.

MOVIE OF SAINT CHARBEL

https://youtu.be/WTexm6MzSWA

The scene where I appear playing the role of Abdo who uses water instead of oil, and the lamp lights up:

https://youtu.be/xb5Ex_XJxyQ

through Intercession St. Sharbel in Arizona Dafne Gutierrez Healed
https://youtu.be/yBhj70vlANQ?si=PXkB9C88hZrkmEHS

You can assist the following fantastic Youtube:

St. Charbel: The Saint with Most Miracles Ever? - Explaining the Faith

By: Father Chris Alar

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If you have any questions, please write to: prof.georges.raad@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I bow down before our great teacher and Lord Jesus Christ on the path he opened for mankind more than 2000 years ago, and I glorify him as the Father glorified him. I bow before all the Fraternity, the Masters, the Saints, the Angels who have clarified my ideas. I bow before my Blessed Mother and even more deeply before Our Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who chose me to spread her ministry.

I bow before my father and mother who have agreed to place me in the world and to educate me. I bow before all the children who inspired me by their innocence and purity to obey the words of Our Jesus Christ who loved them and called them when the elders sent them away because the kingdom of God belongs to them.

I bow before the Creator who is present on this earth.

My thanks and gratitude follow:

Abbot Boulos Naaman Former superior of the Lebanese Maronite order. Our symbol of the struggle for the existence of Lebanon massacred by ethnic groups that we sheltered and to which we responded with hatred and fratricide of children, women and youth who defended themselves because they were Christians.

Abbot Jean Tabet Former Superior of the Lebanese Maronite Order and former Rector of the University of the Holy Spirit - Kaslik who taught me the Unconditional Love for Christ.

Father Paul Daher The great devotee of Saint Charbel who has written the most books on the life of our Saint and has been translated into several languages. I participated with his screenplay in the film on the life of Saint Charbel and my adviser in the direction of many scenes.

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Bishop Jospeh Mahfouz Ex-Bishop of the Maronite Church in Brazil. Doctor of theology and a world reference for all authors about the Maronites.

Father Youssef Mouannes Father Superior and actor who represented the role of Saint Charbel with extraordinary and moving perfection of acting and representation of the life of Saint Charbel and who had the honor to work together on the film.

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To all these honored and generous souls, as well as to those I may have omitted to mention, I would like to express my gratitude.

TO MY MOTHER

To my mother, who worked her heart out to get me into the University of the Holy Spirit USEK.

My Mother, Rose Sabeh Harb, with Father Superior, Boulos Naaman, on her first visit to Brazil, with Blessed Youhanna Chedid, former bishop of the Maronite Church in Brazil, and my brother, Nabih Mikhael Raad.

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A Chosen One of the Lord, like Saint Charbel, whose life took place in the remote and legendary Lebanon; whose deeds shook his convictions, attracted the most hardened unbelievers to the Holy Church, and whose fame and glory spread throughout the world, should not and could not remain ignored in this blessed land of North America and worldwide.

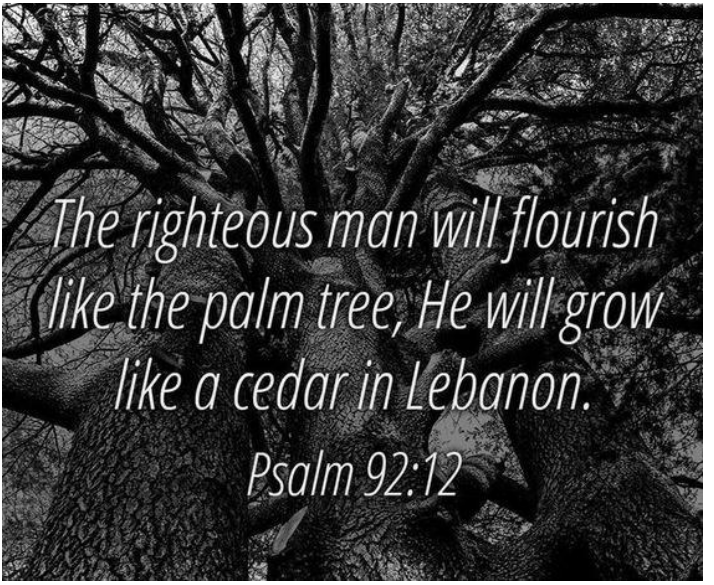
God is the one who dwells up there in the most sublime places of eternity, and at the same time down here below in the solitude of the saints, and under their caves, in their tabernacles and cells, where he spends his days talking with them in secret.
Alas, how many joys and so many heavenly consolations, said Saint Charbel in his talks with God!

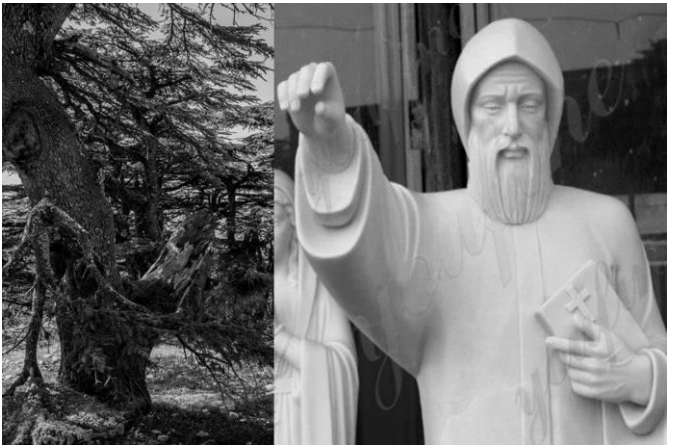
This is why you should read this book in english. That and for another reason: the desire to contribute, with my modest effort, to the greatest exaltation of the Saint who raised the work of Christ's soldiers on earth; dead, he continues to cooperate with them, by convincing miracles.

We will see through the figure of "Charbel" the path of Christ's life. This is the first impression that people will notice when reading the book and watching the film about the life of Saint Charbel, in which I participated in the scene of the lamp, in its black and white version, made in 1966, one year after the beatification of Saint Charbel.

It is the spiritual union in Christ that unites worldwide and Lebanon.

Georges Mikhael Raad





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